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### "The Best Man That Ever Trod Shoe Leather" and His "Crown of Rejoicing" : The Personal Relationship of James and Ellen White, 1845-1881

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ABSTRACT

“THE BEST MAN THAT EVER TROD SHOE LEATHER” AND  
HIS “CROWN OF REJOICING”: THE PERSONAL  
RELATIONSHIP OF JAMES AND  
ELLEN WHITE, 1845–1881

by

Gerson Cardoso Rodrigues

Adviser: Jerry Moon

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: “THE BEST MAN THAT EVER TROD SHOE LEATHER” AND HIS “CROWN OF REJOICING”: THE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP OF JAMES AND ELLEN WHITE, 1845–1881

Name of researcher: Gerson Cardoso Rodrigues

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Jerry Moon, Ph.D.

Date completed: February 2022

James White (1821-1881) and Ellen G. White (1827-1915), co-founders (with Joseph Bates) of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, were united in marriage on August 30, 1846, and lived together for thirty-five years until James died. As leaders (though Ellen White never assumed any administrative post) of the emerging denomination and putting all effort for the growth and mission of the Adventist cause, the Whites lived an intense life of writing, publishing, preaching, and traveling. Though their marriage was a blessing for both of them, the intensity of their lives, health issues, and their humanity, caused marital difficulties in some periods of their marriage.

The purpose of this dissertation is to describe and analyze the personal relationship between James and Ellen White, from their first interactions with each other

in 1845 until the death of James White in 1881, to discover whether the trajectory of the marriage of James and Ellen White shows the functionality of the relationship along the marital career to the end.

This was a documentary study based primarily on published and unpublished sources produced by James White and Ellen G. White. The most heavily used primary source was the correspondence, autobiographical works, articles, and manuscripts written by the couple White, but also supplemented with secondary sources that included biographies, periodicals, correspondence, and other archival materials.

This research presents four significant contributions to the topic proposed: the dominant meaning of the marriage of James and Ellen White; the greatest barriers or threats to their marriage; the main promoting factors that gave strength to their marriage; and the overall trajectory of their marriage to its end. James and Ellen never implied in any way that their marriage had been a mistake. Though they faced marital problems, as almost all couples do, they never considered the possibility of divorce, legal separation, or otherwise leaving each other permanently. On the contrary, for most of their 35 years together, they not only worked in close partnership, but in physical proximity, content with each other, and their last days were days of affinity, support, and love.

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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A Dissertation  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
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Doctor of Philosophy

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February 2022

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Dedication

To Irlacy  
my “crown of rejoicing”

To Michael, Daniel, and Stephen  
my “heritage from the Lord”



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AR	<i>Adventist Review</i>
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
CAR-AU	Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University
DF	Document File
GC	General Conference
GCB	<i>General Conference Bulletin</i>
GCDB	<i>General Conference Daily Bulletin</i>
HR	<i>Health Reformer</i>
Lt	Letter
Lts	Letters
Ms	Manuscript
PUR	<i>Pacific Union Record</i>
PT	<i>Present Truth</i>
RH	<i>Review and Herald; Second Advent Review and Advent Herald</i>
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
ST	<i>Signs of the Times</i>
WLF	<i>A Word to the “Little Flock”</i>

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of the Problem

James S. White (1821–1881), Ellen G. White (née Harmon; 1827–1915), and Joseph Bates (1792–1872) are considered the principal founders of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. After the Great Disappointment of 1844,<sup>1</sup> James White and Ellen Harmon became closely associated. They spent part of 1845 in travel and labor. They were united in marriage on August 30, 1846, and lived together for thirty-five years until James died (1881). Their entire lives were dedicated to preaching the Adventist message, and consequently in developing, organizing, administering, and guiding the emerging Seventh-day Adventist Church in both its embryonic and growing stages. The closeness of this couple in dedicating their lives to the same purpose put them in a select group of religious movement pioneers.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The Great Disappointment refers to the experience of William Miller’s followers, the Millerite Adventists, when the Second Advent of Jesus did not take place on October 22, 1844.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald D. Graybill notes that among women who either founded or led a religious movement, very few had their husbands either aiding them or sharing their career. Among those who did enjoy the support or teamwork of a husband, he mentions, besides Ellen G. White, Catherine Booth [Salvation Army], Maud B. Booth [Volunteers of America], Myrtle P. Fillmore [Unity School of Christianity], Barbara R. Heck [Mother of Methodism in America], and Phoebe Palmer [Holiness Movement] (Ronald D. Graybill, “The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century” [PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1983], 2).

James White was an energetic man who used all his vigor and leadership for the progress of the Adventist Church. “First among equals,”<sup>3</sup> James is characterized by his son, William White, as a man with “a burning zeal in activity, in harmony with an overmastering faith,”<sup>4</sup> which made him the main leader behind almost all the enterprises developed in the movement until his premature death in 1881.<sup>5</sup>

Ellen G. White, who “exerted the most powerful single influence on Seventh-day Adventist believers,”<sup>6</sup> guided the emergent church through her prophetic gift. Though she did not initiate any doctrine, her visions resolved conflicting doctrinal viewpoints among the early Adventists by pointing them to overlooked texts of Scripture that either confirmed or refuted debated concepts. In this way visions played a formative role in correcting, confirming, and enriching the efforts of the Adventist pioneers to rightly understand the Scriptures.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> *Primus inter pares*. This description of James White is given in Enoch de Oliveira, *A Mão de Deus ao Leme* (São Paulo: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 1985), 161.

<sup>4</sup> William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: The Man Who Couldn’t Wait,” *RH*, February 28, 1935, 8.

<sup>5</sup> James White said, “My life has been given to the upbuilding of these institutions. . . . They are as my children, and I cannot separate my interest from them” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. [Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1948], 1:106; cf. *In Memoriam: A Sketch of the Last Sickness and Death of Elder James White, Who Died at Battle Creek, Michigan, August 6, 1881, together with the Discourse Preached at His Funeral* [Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1881], 45). George Knight claims that “There would have been no Seventh-day Adventist Church as we know it today without his [James White’s] drive and leadership (George R. Knight, *Walking with Ellen White: The Human Interest Story* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999], 73). Gerald Wheeler argues that “Without him the denomination might not have come into existence, or at least achieved the shape and stability that it did” (Gerald Wheeler, *James White: Innovator and Overcomer* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2003], 16).

<sup>6</sup> E. N. Dick, “White, Ellen Gould Harmon,” *Dictionary of American Biography*, 20 vols., ed. Dumas Malone et al (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1943–), 10:98–99.

<sup>7</sup> See Ellen G. White, “The Foundation of Our Faith,” *Special Testimonies*, Series B (n.p., 1904), 56–57; published in idem, *Selected Messages*, 3 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958–1986), 1:206–207.

James and Ellen White both experienced a spiritual revival in the Adventist experience brought about by the Millerite movement.<sup>8</sup> After the Disappointment they became part of a group who believed that the date (October 22, 1844) was right, but there was a mistake concerning the event.<sup>9</sup> Through intensive study of the Bible and interaction with other believers, they discovered additional biblical doctrines unknown to them, and the Seventh-day Adventist denomination was formed.<sup>10</sup>

The relationship of James and Ellen White was marked by mutual love and support, but there were also trials. Their early married life was marked by tremendous poverty.<sup>11</sup> They also were frequently stricken by illnesses. Their extensive travel schedule resulted in their children spending more time with others than with them.<sup>12</sup> Their mutual dedication to each other greatly affected their relationship to the church. Likewise, their relationship to the church also significantly affected their relationship to each other. Gerald Wheeler notes that “people could not separate the roles of James and Ellen White,

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<sup>8</sup> See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:48–58; James White, *Life Incidents: In Connection with the Great Advent Movement as Illustrated by the Three Angels of Revelation XIV* (Battle Creek, MI: 1868; facsimile reprint, with an Introduction by Jerry Moon [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003]), 73–120.

<sup>9</sup> For an examination of the fragmentation of Millerism, see George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993), 231–319; idem, *William Miller and the Rise of Adventism* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2010), 196–271; Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, rev. ed. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000), 51–56.

<sup>10</sup> The Seventh-day Adventist Church was officially organized in May 1863.

<sup>11</sup> See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:75–97; idem, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White: Being a Narrative of Her Experience to 1881 as Written by Herself; compiled from Original Sources* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915), 105–109.

<sup>12</sup> Ellen G. White stated, “The greatest sacrifice I was called to make in connection with the work was to leave my children to the care of others” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:101).

and when they attacked one, they at the same time undercut the influence and credibility of the other.”<sup>13</sup>

During his lifetime, James became “a chief source of encouragement and assistance” in preparing Ellen White’s publications.<sup>14</sup> His editorial assistance was of great value to Ellen White. He “acted as a helper and counselor.” This editorial help basically included “correcting grammatical errors, and eliminating needless repetition.”<sup>15</sup> Some Adventists, however, suspected James of influencing Ellen’s writings.<sup>16</sup> James generally opposed all such reasoning, but a couple months before his death, depressed by the effects of several apoplectic strokes, he wrote one letter in which he alleged that “Elders Butler and Haskell [General Conference president and secretary, respectively, after James’s retirement] have had an influence over her [Ellen] that I hope to see broken. It has nearly ruined her.”<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, the counsels and guidance given through Ellen White played an important role in James’s life. From the beginning, James completely accepted Ellen

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<sup>13</sup> Wheeler, *James White*, 104.

<sup>14</sup> Jerry Allen Moon, “William Clarence (W. C.) White: His Relationship to Ellen G. White and Her Work” (PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 1993), xiii; published as Jerry Allen Moon, *W.C. White and Ellen G. White: The Relationship between the Prophet and Her Son*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 19 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993), xiii.

<sup>15</sup> Ellen G. White, (Lt 225) July 8, 1906; published in idem, *Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913), 4; quoted in idem, *Selected Messages*, 3:89.

<sup>16</sup> See for example, Ellen G. White to W. C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 8a) July 27, 1881.

<sup>17</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 6 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981–1986), 2:445.

White's ministry as a spiritual gift.<sup>18</sup> He nevertheless stated his position that the Bible was a "perfect, and complete revelation," thus any new "true visions are given to lead" to God's written word.<sup>19</sup> His acceptance of the prophetic ministry of his wife and his closeness to her put him "far in advance" of the ideas of "his brethren" concerning the necessities of the Adventist work.<sup>20</sup> The influence of his wife's visions led James to pioneer most of the institutions that expanded the Adventist movement. Furthermore, it "saved him from mistakes he would otherwise have made."<sup>21</sup>

James and Ellen White were the subject of many criticisms. The most common against James were his alleged harshness in treating others and his handling of money.<sup>22</sup> Throughout her life, Ellen had to face accusations of being a false prophet,<sup>23</sup> criticisms about her writings,<sup>24</sup> and of overly protecting her husband and children.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>18</sup> James White, "Letter from Bro. White," *The Day-Star*, September 6, 1845, 17–18; [James White], ed., *A Word to the "Little Flock"* (Gorham, ME: [James White], 1847), 13–14, 22; There were, however, times when James failed in following the light given to him (see James White, *A Solemn Appeal to the Ministry and the People by Elder James White* [Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1873]; quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:425–427). He also [at times] refused to accept Ellen's own words, unless he recognized them as a divine revelation (see Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 66) May 16, 1876; quoted in Ellen G. White, *Daughters of God* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998], 270).

<sup>19</sup> [James White], ed., *A Word to the "Little Flock,"* 13; James White, "A Test," *RH*, October 16, 1855, 61–62.

<sup>20</sup> J. H. Waggoner, "'Suppression' and 'The Shut Door,'" *RH Supplement*, August 14, 1883, 2; cf. Ellen G. White, *The Judgment* (Battle Creek, MI: n.p., 1879), 27.

<sup>21</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996), s.v. "White, James Springer."

<sup>22</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:569–585.

<sup>23</sup> See for example, Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:148–152; also, Uriah Smith, "Mrs. White and Her Work," *RH Extra*, November 22, 1887, 10.

<sup>24</sup> Earlier in her career she was accused of untruth and being condemnatory. (See for example, George I. Butler, "Eld. Canright's Treatment of Eld. and Mrs. White," *RH Extra*, November 22, 1887, 11–12). In her later years she was accused of plagiarism.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Wheeler, *James White*, 103–104.

they had to travel extensively to confront fanaticism, extremism, and dissident movements within their ranks. All of these criticism and trials they faced played a role in their relationship to each other and also their involvement with the church.

James and Ellen White were prolific writers. Their literary legacy to the church includes tens of thousands of pages. Their lives and writings have served to edify, inspire, and guide the Adventist movement in a multi-faceted development. This high-profile leadership has placed James and Ellen in a sphere that serves as an exemplary lifestyle-model for many Adventist believers. Having in mind the cheering and strengthening of the humble,<sup>26</sup> hoping that it would benefit the “cause of truth”<sup>27</sup> “and honor and magnify the name and power of God,”<sup>28</sup> both James and Ellen invested some of their time in publishing several autobiographical works with important, but not comprehensive, sketches of their lives.

The Whites’s relationship was far from problem-free. It was complicated especially by a series of strokes that James experienced in the last fifteen years of his life. The 1870s also was the time when Ellen (besides her common overloading of writing, traveling, and preaching added to long periods of time to complete dedication in caregiving for her husband) was passing through menopause, which probably affected her temperament and mood in some moments.<sup>29</sup> Their relationship was also affected by their

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<sup>26</sup> Ellen G. White, “Experience and Views,” *RH Extra*, July 21, 1851, 1.

<sup>27</sup> 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: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1860), iv.

<sup>28</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, vi.

<sup>29</sup> Ellen herself dated menopause at 1869. It was commonly believed in the Victorian Age that menopause would bring several years of hard and painful time for a woman, in which Ellen herself

differences in dealing with their children, especially their second son, James Edson. It also carried problems about headship at home. In May 1876, for example, Ellen White poured out her heart to Lucinda Hall about some intimate family dealings in which difficult relational matters were exposed.<sup>30</sup> These letters are important primary sources that shed light on a difficult period of the relationship of James and Ellen White.<sup>31</sup>

John Mordechai Gottman, an American psychological researcher and clinician, says, “Marriage is perhaps the most common place of human social relationships,” where “the interaction of married couples is an everyday occurrence.”<sup>32</sup> The German-American social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1890–1947), one of the pioneers in the study of group dynamics,<sup>33</sup> describes marriage as a group situation that shows the general characteristics of group life, in which the smallness of the group and the close intimate relation between its members make it one of the most demanding of all groups to belong to. According to him, marriage demands more profound and lasting dedication than any other human grouping and, covers all aspects of life, which involves desire, and the expectation of

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considering her historical health condition, believed it was a dangerous time for her that could be life-threatening (Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, [Lt 6] June 10, 1869; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:272).

<sup>30</sup> See Ellen G. White, *Daughters of God*, 263–270.

<sup>31</sup> For a psychological analysis of this critical period (1874, 1876) in the marital life of the couple White, see Demóstenes Neves da Silva and Gerson Rodrigues, “The Conjugal Experience of James and Ellen White: Meanings Built by the Couple,” *AUSS* 54.2 (Autumn 2016): 259–298.

<sup>32</sup> John Mordechai Gottman, *What Predicts Divorce? The Relationship Between Marital Processes and Marital Outcomes* (New York and London: Psychology Press, 1994), 1.

<sup>33</sup> See Alfred J. Marrow, *The Practical Theorist: The Life and Work of Kurt Lewin* (New York and London: Basic Books, 1969). Lewin also pioneered the study of marital conflict publishing one of the first theoretical treatments on the subject. Kurt Lewin, “The Background of Conflict in Marriage,” in *Resolving Social Conflicts: Selected Papers in Group Dynamics*, ed., Gertrude Weiss Lewin (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1948), 84–102, slightly edited from a previous publication: Lewin, “The Background of Conflict in Marriage,” in *Modern Marriage*, ed. Moses Jung (New York, NY: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1940), 52–69.

reciprocal access and intimate exposure. A marital group, like any other, “has its own structure, its own goals, and its own relations to other groups,” and its essence “is not the similarity or dissimilarity of its members, but their interdependence.”<sup>34</sup>

Considering the small size of the marriage group (two adults and possibly one or more children), “every move of one member will, relatively speaking, deeply affect the other members, and the state of the group.” “In other words,” Lewin claims, “the smallness of the group makes its members very interdependent.”<sup>35</sup> The position and security of each member within the group depend on how the member feels accepted by the group. Any change in the group affects its members, and any change in one of its members affects the group. Thus, this applies most intensely to conjugal groups. Participation in a marital group requires a submission to group needs but also enough freedom for each person to meet their own needs as well. If the needs are not met, tension arises, leading to unhappiness. If that becomes more intense, it may cause the person to leave the group or want to destroy it.

The causes of tension within a group are several, such as, the degree of need or need satisfaction (e.g., security, acceptance), the amount of freedom, external barriers, conflict between the expectations of group members (or their denial of others’s views or interests), and overlapping groups where other groups, like work, extended family, or church, can compete with or even become more important than the marital relation, generating jealousy. In a marriage setting some specific issues have the potential to produce conflict as well, such as the unmet expectations of one spouse in relation to the

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<sup>34</sup> Lewin, “The Background of Conflict in Marriage” (1948), first quotation from pp. 87–88, and the next from p. 84.

<sup>35</sup> Lewin, “The Background of Conflict in Marriage” (1948), 87–88.



other, an accentuated and/or continuous “state of hunger” (needs unsatisfied) or “oversatiation” (“excess of consummatory actions,” such as sex “in the realm of bodily needs,” and also psychological needs, like cooking, social activities, taking care of children), and differences in the couple’s sexual expectations.<sup>36</sup>

Two things need to be considered concerning the issues that have the potential for bringing tensions. First, these issues can be balanced by placing a high priority on maintaining the marriage. Nancy Van Pelt, a family life educator and family and consumer science professional, observes that to keep an effective long marriage means working “hard to honor the commitment made on their wedding day,” and adds, “highly effective marriages are the result of more than just compatibility and commitment,” but also, “effective communication and conflict management skills are vital.”<sup>37</sup> Depending on the meaning that marriage has for its members it can generate or minimize conflict. Thus, the marriage itself can facilitate the accomplishment of goals or become a barrier to them. Finally, as pointed out by Lewin, “Which of these needs are dominant, which are fully satisfied, which are partly satisfied, and which are not at all satisfied, depend upon the personality of the marriage partners, and upon the setting in which the particular marriage group lives.”<sup>38</sup>

#### Statement of the Problem

Because both James and Ellen White have served as examples of dignity and piety for many Seventh-day Adventists, there has been a natural tendency toward

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<sup>36</sup> Lewin, “The Background of Conflict in Marriage” (1948), 89–100.

<sup>37</sup> Nancy L. Van Pelt, *Highly Effective Marriage* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000), 17, 19.

<sup>38</sup> Lewin, “The Background of Conflict in Marriage,” 91.

hagiography in writings about them. To counterbalance this tendency, efforts have been made in the last four decades to present their lives in a more realistic way by exploring their humanness.<sup>39</sup> Several biographical works have been produced about them. No work, however, has been produced to date that makes an in-depth analysis of their personal relationship in order to clarify possible misconceptions, and provide further insights into their influential lives.<sup>40</sup>

### Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to describe and analyze the personal relationship between James and Ellen White, from their first interaction in 1845 until the death of James White in 1881. This will include an in-depth study of those aspects of their lives that are represented in documented sources, including but not limited to marital, familial, religious/doctrinal, ecclesiastical, and social facets of the White couple. The dissertation will analyze the primary and secondary sources to show whether the trajectory of the couple shows the functionality of the relationship along the marital career to the end. The analysis will seek to identify consistencies or inconsistencies between speech and practice with regard to their marriage, to determine (1) how these affected the central aspects of their marriage, and (2) to what extent did the historical

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<sup>39</sup> For James White, see Virgil Robinson, *James White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976); Wheeler, *James White*; for Ellen White, see Arthur L. White, "Ellen G. White—The Human-Interest Story," in *Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1969), 99–127; idem, "Ellen G. White the Person," *Spectrum* 4 (Spring 1972), 7–28; Knight, *Walking with Ellen White*.

<sup>40</sup> Graybill in his dissertation has presented and analyzed some aspects of the relationship between Ellen and James White. His purpose, nevertheless, was not to make an in-depth study of their relationship, but to compare Ellen White with other nineteenth-century women religious founders (Graybill, "The Power of Prophecy").

development of their lives (words and behavior) strengthened or threatened the marital relationship.

### Justification for the Research

This research is relevant because marriage and family issues are part of the core beliefs of the SDA Church. The Christian ideal of marriage is propagated by the SDAs through literature and media. The church maintains a Department of Family Ministries, active and present from the local church level to the highest denominational level, the General Conference of SDAs. James and Ellen played key roles in the solidification of the theological mentality of the Adventist Church, and their teachings and testimony have impacted the life and practice of SDA members. Moreover, Ellen's teachings have an important place in molding an Adventist Christian family model.

This study is justified for two reasons: (1) Since James and Ellen White are regarded in high-esteem among the members of the Church they founded, and though several biographical works have been produced about them, an in-depth investigation of their relationship to each other has not yet been presented. It is important to know whether James's and Ellen's teachings on marriage are compatible with their own marital experience.

(2) In a postmodern era that values transparency, an open and faithful analysis of the relationship of these two prominent figures of Adventism will, on the one hand, deconstruct unhealthy hagiography, but on the other hand, enable people today to relate in a more tangible way to this early Adventist couple's trials, failures, strengths, and victories.

## Scope/Delimitations

This research has no intention of presenting a complete biography of James and Ellen White. A biographical sketch of both James and Ellen will, however, be presented to provide background. It will, nevertheless, not be comprehensive, but delimited to aspects of their lives that contribute to a historical reconstruction of their relationship.

This research will not provide a study on the spiritual gift of Ellen White, neither is it the intention of this dissertation to prove or disprove the validity of Ellen White's prophetic gift. Since James openly and fully accepted the gift experienced by his wife, this investigation will only focus on how the gift exercised by Ellen White affected their relationship.

It is also beyond the scope of this research to present a complete psychological or sociological analysis of the marital relationship of James and Ellen, or a comprehensive evaluation of their marriage based in modern family theories, although these aspects will be discussed whenever it is relevant for the purpose of the present research. This study agrees with family-systems theory in recognizing that family life means more than the actions of its individual members, but especially "the interactions of all family members operating as a unit of interrelated parts."<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the scope of this research is to evaluate only the parental subsystem, James (husband and father) and Ellen (wife and mother), and will make references to the sibling subsystem only when it reflects or affects the marital relationship of James and Ellen.

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<sup>41</sup> Jack O. Balswick and Judith K. Balswick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 22.

## Methodology and Sources

This research is a documentary study based on both published and unpublished primary sources. An examination of primary sources will provide the necessary information for the reconstruction of the historical background in which James and Ellen White lived and will then investigate their relationship to each other. Secondary sources will be used where appropriate to furnish information concerning historical context and background, or perceptive insights. Among others aspects of the research, special attention will be given to the impact of culture and religion in their lives, aspects of family systems dynamics, the medical effects of James White's strokes, and how these factors affected in their personal relationship.

The present study will make use of theoretical concepts similar to those used by Kurt Lewin concerning marriage as a social group. Lewin is known as a pioneer of modern applied/experimental social psychology,<sup>42</sup> and "one of the first theorists to recognize the importance of interactions between person and environment."<sup>43</sup> His

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Shelley Patnoe, "The Making of Experimental Social Psychologists: The creative Legacy of Kurt Lewin" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 1986); Ellen Berscheid, "Lessons in 'Greatness' from Kurt Lewin's Life and Works," in *The Anatomy of Impact: What Makes the Great Works of Psychology Great*, ed. Robert J. Sternberg (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003), 111–118; Stephen L. Franzoi, "History of Social Psychology," in *Encyclopedia of Social Psychology*, ed. Roy F. Baumeister and Kathleen D. Vohs, 2 vols. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 1:435, 438; John T. Jost and Aaron C. Kay, "Social Justice: History, Theory, and Research," in *Handbook of Social Psychology*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., eds. Susan T. Fiske, Daniel T. Gilbert, and Gardner Lindzey (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2010), 2:1123; Lee Ross, Mark Lepper, and Andrew Ward, "History of Social Psychology: Insights, Challenges, and Contributions to Theory of Application," in Fiske, et al, eds., *Handbook of Social Psychology*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 1:3.

<sup>43</sup> Tami Sullivan, "Ecological System," in *The Sage Encyclopedia of Marriage, Family, and Couples Counseling*, eds. Jon Carlson and Shannon B. Dermer, 4 vols. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2017), 2:494; cf. Donald G. Zytowski, "Person-Environment Fit," in *Encyclopedia of Counseling*, ed. Frederick T. L. Leong, 4 vols. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 4:1601; Marina Manthouli, "The Influence of Psychology on Psychotherapy during the Twentieth Century," in *A*

originality and practicality in dealing with social group dynamics has made important contribution in analyzing the complexity and interdependence of the members involved in a marriage/family unit. Despite the fact that Lewin died several decades ago, his contribution is still relevant in group dynamics.<sup>44</sup>

Lewin's path-breaking expertise was in group theory, but he made a seminal contribution to the understanding of marriage as a type of group. Subsequent leaders in marriage studies have built on and modified Lewin's contribution.<sup>45</sup>

The present study seeks to adapt Lewin's categories for the close examination of one particular marriage relationship, that of James and Ellen White. Among the factors that either facilitate or hinder the success of the marriage, Lewin mentions needs for [1] security and acceptance within the relationship, in comparison to the competing demands of other groups, such as work, extended family, or church; [2] "bodily needs" such as sexual relations; [3] psychological needs such as food preparation, care of children, and

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*Century of Psychology: Progress, Paradigms, and Prospects for the New Millennium*, ed. Ray Fuller Ray Fuller, Patricia Noonan Walsh, Patrick McGinley (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 113.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Harold H. Kelley, "Lewin, Situations, and Interdependence," *Journal of Social Issues* 47.2 (1991): 211–233; Berscheid, "Lessons in 'Greatness' from Kurt Lewin's Life and Works," 109–123; David Coghlan and Teresa Brannick, "Kurt Lewin: The 'Practical Theorist' for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," *Irish Journal of Management* 24.2 (2003): 31–37; Bernard Burnes, "Kurt Lewin and the Planned Approach to Change: A Re-appraisal," *Journal of Management Studies* 41.6 (Sept. 2004): 977–1002; Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Lewinian Space and Ecological Substance," in *Making Human Beings Human: Bioecological Perspectives on Human Development*, ed. Urie Bronfenbrenner (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 41–49; Julio de Mello Filho, "Histórico e Evolução da Psicoterapia de Grupo," in *Grupo e Corpo: Psicoterapia de Grupo com Pacientes Somáticos*, org. Julio de Mello Filho, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (São Paulo: Casa do Psicólogo, 2007), 33–64; Kullervo Rainio, "Kurt Lewin's Dynamical Psychology Revisited and Revised," *Dynamical Psychology: An International, Interdisciplinary Journal of Complex Mental Processes* (2009): 1–20; Paulo Renato Lourenço and Isabel Dórdio Dimas, "O Grupo Revisitado: Considerações em Torno da Dinâmica e dos Processos Grupais," in *Psicologia das Organizações, do Trabalho e dos Recursos Humanos*, ed. Duarte Gomes (Coimbra: Coimbra University Press, 2011), 133–192; Philip G. Zimbardo, "Carrying on Kurt Lewin's Legacy in Many Current Domains Lewin Award 2015," *Journal of Social Issues* 72.4 (Dec. 2016): 828–838.

<sup>45</sup> Matti K. Gershenfeld, "Understanding Enrichment and Therapy in Marriage: The Legacy of Kurt Lewin," in *The Lewin Legacy: Field Theory in Current Practice*, eds. E. Stivers and S. Wheelan (New York, NY: Springer-Verlag, 1986), 79–90; Ellen S. Berscheid and Pamela C. Regan, *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relationships* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 88–89, 417.

social activities. Some of these are more pronounced and others less obvious in the White's marriage, necessitating some customization of the categories to reflect the data available.

This work also will briefly dialogue with modern concepts of family issues, in order to facilitate the analyses of the Whites's marriage. Besides Lewin on marriage and family, the research will also use several sources which approach marriage and family from a specifically biblical perspective,<sup>46</sup> considering the major influence religion and the sacred book of Christianity, the Bible, had on the lives and marriage of James and Ellen White.

To guide the study and provide a framework for analyzing the marital relationship of the White couple, the following research questions have been formulated:

- What indicators are there for the presence or lack of mutual affection?
- What indicators are there that their marriage may have been or not been a marriage of convenience? In later years, did their marriage become a formality?
- What indicators are there to indicate that their respective work/ministry took priority over their personal relationship?
- What indicators are there that their religious experience may have helped or hindered their personal relationship?
- What other indicators are there that their financial stability or poverty, excess or lack of work, rearing their children, loss in the family, conflict, and criticism from others impacted their relationship positively or negatively?

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<sup>46</sup> Balswick and Balswick, *The Family*; Diana R. Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012); Van Pelt, *Highly Effective Marriage*.

Much of the historical background of Seventh-day Adventism can be traced through early SDA periodicals. Since James was founder and editor of the most important SDA periodicals, both he and his wife provided information about their travel schedules, activities, and life in general through the pages of those papers. With the information from these papers, a historical context can be reconstructed which provides insightful perspectives on their relationship.

The incoming and outgoing correspondence files of James and Ellen White, the correspondence files of their sons, Ellen White's diaries, the diaries of others who were closely related to them,<sup>47</sup> and their autobiographies represent the richest and most valuable primary source for the accomplishment of this research.<sup>48</sup> In describing and

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<sup>47</sup> The Ellen G. White Estate holds the James White correspondence file, Ellen G. White's unpublished letters and manuscripts, her incoming correspondence file, numerous document files, and letters of other members of the White family. The Estate has multiple websites that make available online a great part of these files. The best site for *primary source* documents of Ellen White's writings is <https://egw writings.org/>. Additional *secondary source* materials, including thousands of scanned and digitized documents, letters, and photographs from the White Estate Archives, are found at <https://ellenwhite.org/>. Other important archival repositories for this research are the Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, and the Heritage Room of the Loma Linda University Library, Loma Linda, California.

<sup>48</sup> In 1868, James White authored a series of ten articles where he links his life with the history of the Advent experience. The articles appeared intermittently in the *Review and Herald* from February 11 to May 5, 1868 (James White, "Life Incidents"). These articles were slightly edited and much more material was added (the articles cover up to page 209, the book has 373 pages) and published in a book later in that year, James White, *Life Incidents* (see R. F. Cottrell, "Life Incidents," *RH*, September 29, 1868, 192; Joseph Bates, "Camp-Meeting," *RH*, October 6, 1868, 197). These works were later revised (omitting some non-biographical sections, e.g., Miller's life) and updated in James White and Ellen G. 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: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1880), 9–130. A revised edition with the same title appeared in 1888. The later version was largely the same, with minor revisions and including a record of James White's last illness and death. The first autobiographical work by Ellen White was *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (Saratoga Springs, NY: James White, 1851). It mostly deals with visions and doctrines rather than a detailed autobiography. Three years later, in order to explain certain misunderstandings in parts of the first book, she published *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (Rochester, NY: James White, 1854). Later, a few items were added and both works were included in *Early Writings of Mrs. White* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1882). In 1860, she saw the need to clarify who she was and the nature of her work, since she had been mistaken for a Mormon leader. With the help of friends and relying "in many instances, on memory," she published a detailed sketch of her Christian experience, visions, and work connected with



analyzing the marital experience of James and Ellen White, this research will let the works, letters, and diaries of the Whites speak for themselves, avoiding speculation. Also valuable for this work are the biographical works produced by their relatives, especially their son, William C. White, and grandson, Arthur L. White.<sup>49</sup> Biographical works written more recently by non-relatives also give insights into the background of the White couple which are valuable for investigating the context behind many of their shared letters and writings.<sup>50</sup>

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Adventism (Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:iii–iv, 7–300). *Spiritual Gifts* became the starting point for her autobiographical sketches published later. In 1876, she decided to edit and enlarge her previous autobiographies, “filling in the broken links in the history of my life” (Ellen White, Diary Entry, January 11, 1876, Oakland; Ms 2, 1876). The sketches were then amplified, with the inclusion of much new material, and published in a series of articles edited by James White, “Mrs. Ellen G. White: Her Life, Christian Experience, and Labors,” *ST*, from January 6 through May 11, 1876. They were later published in book form in a co-authored work with her husband, *Life Sketches* (1880 and 1888). In 1885, when the church decided to standardize the series of pamphlets called *Testimonies*, it inserted a biographical sketch of Ellen White, which added some features of her experience not found in previous works, but also deleted some details published earlier (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:9–112. In the year Ellen White died, another autobiography was published. It was divided into two parts: Ellen wrote the first forty one chapters (pp. 17–254), and the other twenty (pp. 255–480) were written by Clarence C. Crisler, with the assistance of Ellen G. White’s son, William C. White, and Dores E. Robinson (Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*). It drew heavily on the previous works, but was more condensed. In 1922, a little volume aiming to introduce the life and teachings of Ellen to “busy readers” was published with short articles from her writings. The compilation of this posthumous publication began when she was still alive and brought “a great joy to her.” The biographical part was basically composed from her earlier works (*Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1922], 7–8, 259). Closely related to it is *A Brief Sketch of the Life and Teachings of Ellen G. White: A Narrative of Early Experiences and Choice Selections from Her Writings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1933), prepared to be used by evangelists. An insightful unpublished document that is available online is *Life Sketches Manuscript: Compiled from previously published sources, and augmented with material from previously unpublished interviews with Ellen White* (1915).

<sup>49</sup> William C. White wrote a few “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White,” in the *Review and Herald (RH)* which appeared intermittently between February 28, 1935, and February 24, 1938. Later these articles were compiled and published in book form as Willie [William] C. White, *Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White*, compiled by Leah Schmitke (Mentone, CA: by the compiler, n.d.). See Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, especially the first three volumes; idem, *Ellen White: Woman of Vision* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000). The last is a one-volume abridgment of the previous work.

<sup>50</sup> Margaret R. Thiele, *By Saddle and Sleigh: A Story of James White’s Youth* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1965); V. Robinson, *James White*; Wheeler, *James White*; Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998), 44–131. Douglass does not deal with her life chronologically, but presents several aspects of her life and experiences; Knight, *Walking with Ellen White*. The most comprehensive work about Ellen White’s thought

Several secondary sources which either describe or analyze the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination will be investigated, because they extensively present the importance, influence, and leadership of the White family in those formative years.

### Design of the Study

When studying a marital relationship, which includes two units (individuals, the husband and the wife) within a group system, all the levels within that system are significant. In a family realm to try to understand a person and the marital association he/she is immersed, it is necessary to analyze the interrelation of the multicultural (socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, racial, geographical, religious, historical) level, and the social level that includes both the communities outside the related family (school, work, friends, neighbors, faith) and the directed related family (extended and nuclear).<sup>51</sup>

The research will be divided into six main chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter will be an introduction. The second chapter, recognizing that James and Ellen White did not develop in a vacuum, has the purpose of providing information about the cultural and historical background of America in the nineteenth century. Since a comprehensive presentation of the milieu in which they lived could be a theme for a

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on several topics and also a biographical presentation on persons and events with which she was involved is, Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon, eds., *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013). Another important series that began to be published in order to contextualize the letters, diaries, and manuscripts of Ellen White is Timothy L. Poirier, gen. ed., *The Ellen G. White Letters and Manuscripts with Annotations, 1845–1859* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2014). For a comprehensive list of works about Ellen White, see Merlin D. Burt, “Bibliographic Essay on Publications about Ellen G. White,” *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 148–213. For a brief but insightful analyses of Ellen’s biographies, see Gary Land, “Biographies,” in *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, eds. Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 322–345.

<sup>51</sup> Balswick and Balswick, *The Family*, 23–24.

dissertation in itself, only selected elements that were significant in shaping the Whites's lives will be explored.

The third chapter will present a concise biographical sketch of both James and Ellen White, and analyze the context in which they lived. It will also provide a summary of the differences and similarities in their lives which influenced their personalities.

Chapter four will describe and analyze their relationship from the first time they interacted (1845) until they moved from Rochester to Battle Creek (1855). During this period the newly-born Sabbatarian Adventist movement had to deal with the biblical formation of their doctrinal pillars. Through these years, the White family lived in extreme poverty and Ellen White gave birth to three of their four sons.

Chapter five will investigate the period from their move to Battle Creek (1855) to the time before James's first stroke (1865) in order to describe and analyze their marital relationship. This was a time during which their circumstances began to improve.<sup>52</sup> The period was marked by intense and stressful work leading to the organization of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. The intensity of the work produced by James during those days led to a stroke that drastically changed his and Ellen's lives.

Chapter six will examine the last years of the White couple together, from James's first stroke (August 1865) until his death (August 1881) in order to describe and analyze their marital relationship. This turbulent period was greatly stressful for them in that James overburdened himself with church matters, and Ellen White, for part of that

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<sup>52</sup> Ellen White, talking about their move from Rochester to Battle Creek refers to it as the time when "the Lord began to turn our captivity." She explains that in Battle Creek, they found sympathizing friends, "who were ready to share our burdens and supply our wants" (Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, 159).

time, had to turn her attention more fully to the health of her husband. The intensity of his illness caused changes in James's personality, which significantly influenced their relationship. Ellen also faced some health problems, which distressed her for some time. This period also marks the transition of their two sons from adolescence to adulthood, including their independence and marriage. The study will close with a summary analysis of their relationship, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER 2

### JAMES AND ELLEN WHITE’S WORLD: THE UNITED STATES IN THE MID–NINETEENTH CENTURY

#### Introduction

The early decades of the nineteenth century in the United States were a time of remarkable optimism, growth, and change.<sup>1</sup> Changes in Western civilization in the eighteenth century resulted in radical changes in the United States. The American Revolution, an expression of the “democratic revolution” character of those days,<sup>2</sup> established a government that constitutionally supported the inalienable human right to individual freedom and declared separation between church and state. These revolutionary views set the stage for dramatic religious, social, and political changes in the newly independent nation.

Geographically, the United States underwent a major westward expansion. Economically, it moved from a farming economy to a new industrial era marked by a transportation revolution and a growing market economy. Politically, democratic republicanism was established and the Federalists were defeated. Religiously, it was

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is a revised and enlarged version of a previous work published as Gerson Rodrigues, “The United States in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century: The Religious Context for the Adventist Movement,” in *The Book and the Student: Theological Education as Mission*, ed. Wagner Kuhn (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 2012), 265-287.

<sup>2</sup> For a “magisterial reassessment” of the democratic spirit that fermented Europe and America between 1760–1800, see R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959, 1964). Though Palmer suggests that the last half of the eighteenth century was “the age of the democratic revolution,” he recognizes that except in America, the attempts before the 1790s to democratize Western civilization were either “crushed” or “of very doubtful success” (Palmer, 2:v).

shaken by a Great Awakening, and as the result of a few eighteenth-century events (e.g., the Lisbon earthquake and the French Revolution), the citizens of this newly formed nation “may have lived in the shadow of Christ’s second coming more intensely than any generation since.”<sup>3</sup> This millennial environment led to the emergence of many sectarian and utopian communities.

The first half of the nineteenth century is also known as a period of development for many reform movements. Henry S. Commager calls this time, especially the Middle Period, “a day of universal reform” when “almost every man” had “a plan for a new society.”<sup>4</sup> The years before the Civil War saw a “proliferation of reforms” and “it was a rare person who engaged in only one of them.”<sup>5</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to briefly explore the nineteenth century in America in order to contextualize the days when both James White (1821–1881) and Ellen Harmon (1827–1915) were born and raised. Attention will be given to the economic, social, political, and religious milieus. Since both James and Ellen were born in Maine, this study will focus especially on events in or affecting New England.

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<sup>3</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 184; quoted in George R. Knight, *Ellen White’s World: A Fascinating Look at the Times in Which She Lived* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), 14.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Steele Commager, *The Era of Reform, 1830–1860* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand, 1960), 7; quoted in Knight, *Ellen White’s World*, 28.

<sup>5</sup> Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815–1860*, rev. ed. (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1997), xiii.

## Politics in the Early Nineteenth Century

### Democratic Republicanism

The new century began with a new president, Thomas Jefferson (1801–1809). Jefferson, in addition to being the principal author of the Declaration of Independence (1776), played an influential role in promoting the ideals of republicanism and the separation of state and church in the United States.<sup>6</sup> During his presidency, a major geographic expansion occurred with the Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803, “the greatest diplomatic triumph in the history of the United States,” which doubled the size of

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<sup>6</sup> Jefferson was not hostile to religion, but “he was implacably hostile to any governmental meddling in religion.” Presidents, in his view, “should have nothing to do with thanksgiving proclamations or days of prayer or times of devotion” (Edwin S. Gaustad, *Faith of the Founders: Religion and the New Nation, 1776–1826* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004], 45, cf. 45–50). Gaustad considers Jefferson as “the most self-consciously theological of all America’s presidents.” He points out that Jefferson “dedicated himself more deliberately and diligently to the reform of religion than any other president,” and “in partnership with James Madison, he did more to root religious liberty firmly in the American tradition than any predecessor or successor in the White House” (Edwin S. Gaustad, *Sworn on the Altar of God: A Religious Biography of Thomas Jefferson* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996], xiii). Jefferson, greatly influenced by Enlightenment philosophers, was a Deist who had a humanistic interpretation of Christian morality. He had fought for separation of church and state since the early days of his political career. As one of the principal authors of the Constitution, he voiced the same idea as the first president of the nation, George Washington, who stated in 1793, “We have abundant reason to rejoice that in this land the light of truth and reason has triumphed over the power of bigotry and superstition and that every person may here worship God according to the dictates of his own heart” (Letter from George Washington to the members of the ‘New Church’ in Baltimore, January 27, 1793; quoted in Gary Scott Smith, *Faith and the Presidency: From George Washington to George W. Bush* [New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006], 49). For a synthesis of the religious liberty views of the founding fathers of the United States and how they were applied in the new republic, see Marcio Costa, “Principles of Church-State Relationships in the Writings of Ellen G. White” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2010), 1–10. For more on Jefferson and his religious ideologies, see Adrienne Koch, *The Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1943); Charles B. Sanford, *Thomas Jefferson and His Library: A Study of His Literary Interests and of the Religious Attitudes Revealed by Relevant Titles in His Library* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1977); Charles B. Sanford, *The Religious Life of Thomas Jefferson* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1984); and Gaustad, *Sworn on the Altar of God*.

the nation.<sup>7</sup> As Arthur Ekirch notes, Jefferson “combined an international outlook with a liberal faith that the United States would be the theatre of the world’s future progress.”<sup>8</sup>

Victory in the War of 1812 (1812–1814/15) began “an era of unprecedented stability and prosperity” for the American people that turned out to be one of the greatest chapters in U.S. history.<sup>9</sup> It opened a new horizon for progress and an “era of good feelings” (1817–1825). The demise of Federalism united the nation in one political party—the Democratic-Republican Party. Nationalism increased, and in the hands of James Monroe (1817–1825), the nation was transformed into a glorious empire.<sup>10</sup> Andrew Jackson (1829-1837) later presided over the triumph of democracy, putting into practice egalitarian principles and bringing in “the era of the common man.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Fleming, *The Louisiana Purchase* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2003), 1, 182. This acquisition was a major accomplishment in the evolution of a minor nation into an “empire,” as Robert Livingston (American, Minister to the Court of Napoleon [1801–c. 1805], appointed by Jefferson to negotiate the purchase) stated: “From this day the United States take their place among the powers of the first rank” (quoted in Howard Jones, *Crucible of Power: A History of American Foreign Relations to 1913*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009], 64). In 1819, the United States expanded to the south by purchasing the territory of Florida from Spain.

<sup>8</sup> Arthur Alphonse Ekirch, Jr., *The Idea of Progress in America, 1815–1860* (New York, NY: AMS Press, 1969), 31.

<sup>9</sup> John Mayfield, *The New Nation, 1800–1845*, rev. ed. (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1982), 43.

<sup>10</sup> See Harlow Giles Unger, *The Last Founding Father: James Monroe and a Nation’s Call to Greatness* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2009), 2, 261–276; Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 91–124. Monroe introduced what came to be known as the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, which had the purpose to weaken the European influence and expansion in the American continents.

<sup>11</sup> Winthrop S. Hudson, “A Time of Religious Ferment,” in *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-century America*, ed. Edwin S. Gaustad (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1974), 3.



## Environment of Freedom

Thomas Jefferson in his First Inaugural Address in 1801 concisely described that “the sum of good government,” would include giving freedom and incentive to its people, leaving men “free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned.”<sup>12</sup> The subsequent presidents in the nineteenth century America followed this *laissez-faire* theory, which permitted the populace to pursue business and trade with a minimum of government interference. American people therefore had the opportunity of pulling themselves out of poverty through hard work and entrepreneurship.

Poverty and the environment of freedom stimulated hard work and entrepreneurship. The New England “Yankees” were famous for their self-reliant mentality, their independence, and their work ethic. Americans were recognized as a laborious people. Francis Grund (d. 1863), a European who lived in America for several years, contrasted America with the “sociable idleness of Europe,”

There is, probably, no people on earth with whom business constitutes pleasure, and industry amusement, in an equal degree with the inhabitants of the United States of America. Active occupation is ... the principal source of their happiness, and the foundation of their national greatness.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Barbara B. Oberg, gen. ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 33, *February to April 1801* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 150.

<sup>13</sup> Francis J. Grund, *The Americans, In Their Moral, Social and Political Relations* (Boston: Marsh, Capen and Lyon, 1837), 202–203; quoted in Daniel T. Rogers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850–1920* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 5.

New England was largely influenced by a wave of English-speaking Puritan immigrants who arrived in the region especially from 1629 to 1640.<sup>14</sup> The district of Maine (gained state status in 1820) housed several settlements in its first two centuries. As the plantations multiplied in the area, successive generations struggled “with wars and difficulties reiterated and uncommon, and to wade through sufferings deep and indescribable.” Around the time of the American Revolution, and especially after it, the region experienced “a period of remarkable prosperity, apparent in the improvements, wealth and numbers of the people.”<sup>15</sup> Besides the religious focus of the Puritans, there was also an emphasis on family, “education, a strong work ethic, egalitarianism, ... and a tendency to live in small rural communities.”<sup>16</sup> The difficulties of settlement in that part of the country, filled with wars, made the Mainers enduring and persistent people. The Christian focus on morals led the Mainers to be among the first in organizing societies to socially reform the nation.<sup>17</sup>

James and Ellen White came from poor rural families who combined primitive dirt-farming with urban entrepreneurship. The characteristics of their families easily fit the general description of those in New England. They were both raised in a Christian environment which valued education, hard work, persistence, and both were open minded toward social and religious reforms that worked for the bettering of the society.

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<sup>14</sup> David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 16–17. They arrived mostly in Massachusetts but their children moved rapidly from its borders.

<sup>15</sup> William D. Williamson, *The History of the State of Maine: From Its First Discovery, A.D. 1602, to the Separation, A.D. 1820, Inclusive*, 2 vols. (Hallowell, [ME]: Glazier, Masters & Co., 1832), 1:iii.

<sup>16</sup> Wheeler, *James White* 19; see Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 13–206, 813–815.

<sup>17</sup> Wheeler, *James White* 19–20; cf. Walters, *American Reformers*, rev. ed., 117–118, 138–141.

## An Era of Progress

The first half of the nineteenth century in America was a time of social, economic, cultural, geographic, and technological advancement. It was a transformative period in the history of the early nation. Theories of progress from European philosophers found a fertile soil and a favorable atmosphere in the “advantages of youth” combined with “a superior form of republican government,” which resulted in “a tremendous expansion in population, wealth, and territory.” Patriotic intellectual citizens saw the United States as “a land of progress, freedom, and destiny.”<sup>18</sup>

Demographically, these were days of unparalleled mobility and increase. The United States had a population of 3.9 million in 1790 (the year of the first United States census), which tripled by 1830, when the population was 12.8 million. From 1815 to 1860, the number of states in the union and the total land area of the country doubled. The U.S. population also quadrupled,<sup>19</sup> partly as a result of large-scale foreign immigration, which influenced the nation religiously, intellectually, politically, and culturally.<sup>20</sup> This transformation mostly affected and benefited the great cities.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ekirch, *The Idea of Progress in America*, 26–27.

<sup>19</sup> In 1815 there were eighteen states in the union, while in 1860 the number reached thirty three, including California and Oregon on the Pacific coast. While in 1815 the land area was 1.7 million square miles, by 1860 it had reached its present continental limits, adding about 1.2 million square miles. The population that was in 1814, 8,400,000, reached on the eve of the Civil War, 31,443,321, a growth averaging over thirty three percent per decade (Walters, *American Reformers*, 4).

<sup>20</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Paths to the Present* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1949), 74. Schlesinger estimates that about 250,000 immigrants entered the United States during the 1790s–1810s, and the numbers, mostly composed of Europeans, reached 500,000 in the 1830s, 1,500,000 in the 1840s, and 2,500,000 in the 1850s (Schlesinger, *Paths to the Present*, 58).

<sup>21</sup> Francis X. Femminella, “The Immigrant and the Urban Melting Pot,” in *Perspectives on Urban America*, ed. Melvin I. Urofsky (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1973), 43–65; Francis X. Femminella,

This social change was driven by a transportation revolution, which led to a transformation in the market. At the close of the War of 1812, the United States “turned enthusiastically to developing more effective means of internal transportation,” especially canals and turnpikes.<sup>22</sup> These new enterprises “opened up the fertile lands of the interior to interregional markets” and “brought millions of emigrants westward to the cheap lands of newly settled regions.”<sup>23</sup> The completion in 1825 of the 364-mile Erie Canal, the longest in the world, “set off a nation-wide craze for canal building.” By 1840, the nation had 3,326 miles of canals.<sup>24</sup> This marked the “golden age of the river steamboat,” which

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“The Immigrant and the Urban Melting Pot,” in *Geographic Perspectives on America’s Past: Readings on the Historical Geography of the United States*, ed. David Ward (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1979), 61–69. David Ward points out that in 1790 the urban population was 5.1 per cent of the total population, while by 1850 more than 15 per cent of the population was urban dwellers. The largest cities were New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, which housed about forty percent of the urban population. (David Ward, *Cities and Immigrants: A Geography of Change in Nineteenth-century America* [New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1971], 6, 21, 25–26). Walters notes that in 1810, there were 46 “urban areas” (defined as places with 2,500 or more population), and in 1860, there were 393 urban areas, including two cities (New York City and Philadelphia) with over half a million residents (Walters, *American Reformers*, 5).

<sup>22</sup> George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815–1860*, vol. 4 in *The Economic History of the United States* (New York, NY: Rinehart, 1958), 32.

<sup>23</sup> Michael P. Young, “Confessional Protest: The Religious Birth of U.S. National Social Movements,” *American Sociological Review* 67.5 (Oct 2002): 669. Young notes that by the beginning of the century less than 15 percent of American people “lived west of the eastern states of the South Atlantic, Middle Atlantic, and New England,” while “by 1830, more than 25 percent of the population” settled west of Pennsylvania) For a comprehensive analysis of the “statistics and migration patterns” for the United States among both the White and Black population between the Revolution and Civil War, see Peter D. McClelland and Richard J. Zeckhauser, *Demographic Dimensions of the New Republic: American Interregional Migration, Vital Statistics, and Manumissions, 1800-1860* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1982). A major movement that dominated the “ebb and flow of population within this period” was from East to West, and a secondary trend was from South to North (McClelland and Zeckhauser, 18).

<sup>24</sup> Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution*, 34, 52. Taylor points out, however, that no canals of major size were begun between 1840 and 1860 due to the financial crises of 1837 and 1839 (p. 52).

dominated American river transportation by 1830 and became the “most important agency” of transportation within America for the next two decades.<sup>25</sup>

An additional crucial element in the transportation revolution that brought economic changes throughout the United States was the railroads. Their construction began in 1828, and there were almost 9,000 miles of railroad tracks by 1850, transporting people and products where steamboats and other means of transport could not go.<sup>26</sup>

The single invention that probably did the most to unify the expansive economy in America was the telegraph. Nicknamed the “highway of thought,” it was perfected in the 1840s by Samuel Morse, and definitely helped to bring people closer over the grand distances of the United States by speeding the transmission of information.<sup>27</sup>

### Christianity in America

The American people were greatly influenced by religion. As the French political writer, Alexis de Tocqueville positively observed, there were “countless sects” and each adored God in a particular fashion, but they “all agree[d] about man’s duties to his fellow man” and were “encompassed within the overarching unity of ... Christian morality.”

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<sup>25</sup> Taylor, *Transportation*, 58. The period from 1815–1860 is considered the golden age of the steamboat. Robert Fulton (1765–1815) was greatly responsible for the success of the “mechanical transportation revolution.” After some years studying in Europe, he came to the United States in 1806 and designed his first American steamboat. Fulton’s successful trips in 1807 through the Hudson River (between New York City and Albany) and the launch of his first Mississippi steamboat in 1811 revolutionized water travel in America. For insightful research into the history of the steamboat, see Steven Harvey, *It Started with a Steamboat: An American Saga* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2007). Though Harvey focuses on the development in New York’s Finger Lakes, he gives a good overview of how the steamboat influenced and reshaped American society by introducing the modern age of transportation and travel.

<sup>26</sup> Taylor, *Transportation*, 74, 84.

<sup>27</sup> For an insightful account of the story of the telegraph and Morse’s influence in the America, see Tom Standage, *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century’s On-line Pioneers* (New York, NY: Walker, 1998).

According to Tocqueville, the Christian atmosphere he saw in the United States was fundamental in keeping democracy, freedom, and loyalty among Americans.<sup>28</sup>

There was a dramatic religious expansion, both numerically and geographically, in nineteenth-century America. Edwin Gaustad argues that it resulted from five factors: (1) “the conquest of the West,” in which the “churches followed and occasionally led this steady migration”; (2) “the reconquest of the East” that moved on the waves of revivalism of the Second Great Awakening; (3) immigration; (4) the “rise of new religious groups”; and (5) “respectability,” which demanded church attendance and support.<sup>29</sup>

According to Robert Baird, a nineteenth-century American clergyman, the evangelical denominations in the United States in the first decades of the nineteenth century could be subsumed under five great denominational families: Baptist, Episcopal, Lutheran, Congregational/Presbyterian, and Methodist. He estimated that by midcentury, these five groups had a membership of over four million, with a population of over seventeen million “more or less under the influence of the evangelical denominations.”<sup>30</sup> As noted by Mark Noll, “Dissenting churches soon gained the support of political leaders

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<sup>28</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, transl. by Arthur Goldhammer (New York, NY: Library of America, 2004), 1:335; cf. 332–347. Volume 1 was first published in 1835 after Tocqueville’s visit to the United States in 1831.

<sup>29</sup> Edwin Scott Gaustad, *Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1962), 37–47.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Baird, *Religion in America; or, An Account of the Origin, Relation to the State, and Present Condition of the Evangelical Churches in the United States. With Notices of the Unevangelical Denominations* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1856), 532; cf. 530–532; quoted in Gaustad, *Faith of the Founders*, 119.

like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison,” who “favored disestablishing the churches more from a general concern for liberty than for religious reasons.”<sup>31</sup>

The Baptists grew rapidly during the years immediately preceding and following the American Revolution. Their growth was so significant that by 1800 they had become the largest religious group in America.<sup>32</sup> William Miller was of Baptist roots and was licensed as a Baptist preacher after his conversion from Deism.<sup>33</sup> Miller became the father of Millerism, a religious Adventist movement that changed the life of both James and Ellen in the 1840s. James White’s mother was a granddaughter of Dr. Samuel Shepard, an eminent Baptist minister in New England. White’s father also became a Baptist, being attracted to it by the doctrine of baptism by immersion. He became an active member of the Baptist faith until he joined the Christian Connexion, a movement in the Restorationist tradition.<sup>34</sup>

Methodism also experienced impressive growth: officially organized in the United States as an independent denomination in 1784, it became the largest American denomination in 1820.<sup>35</sup> The Methodist church not only grew in numbers, but also “exploded spatially,” thanks to their numerous itinerant preachers.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Mark A. Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World: The History of North American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 50.

<sup>32</sup> John Corrigan and Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America: An Historical Account of the Development of American Religious Life*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004), 140.

<sup>33</sup> Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller, Generally Known as a Lecturer on the Prophecies, and the Second Coming of Christ* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1853), 108–109; William Miller, *Wm. Miller’s Apology and Defence* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1845), 19.

<sup>34</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 10–11.

<sup>35</sup> Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 142. Methodism had been in America long before 1784, but it had been a movement not apart from Anglicanism. According to John Hurst, the first Methodist sermon in America where there is a “definite account,” was preached by Philip Embury in “a private

The impressive success of Baptists and Methodists resulted from an “incarnation of the church into popular culture,” in which they joined “most efficiently a democratic appeal with effective leadership.”<sup>37</sup> Methodism was in a large sense responsible for making evangelical religion “more enthusiastic, individualistic, egalitarian, entrepreneurial, and lay oriented” in the favorable democratic milieu that surged in a post-Revolution America.<sup>38</sup> Ellen Harmon’s family was a committed and dynamic family of the Methodist faith up to the time they were converted to Millerism, and consequently were disfellowshipped from Methodism.<sup>39</sup>

The number of Roman Catholics in America also greatly increased in the nineteenth century; the main source of this growth was immigration. Between 1790 and 1850, more than one million immigrants of Roman Catholic background arrived in the United States, and this large-scaled immigration continued until the end of the century. Catholic religious orders established several colleges, academies, and schools to keep

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dwelling” in New York city, in early 1766 (John Fletcher Hurst, *The History of Methodism*, 7 vols. [New York, NY: Eaton & Mains, 1902–1904], 4:2). For a history of the organization of Methodism in North America, see Norman W. Spellmann, “The Formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church,” in *The History of American Methodism*, gen. ed. Emory S. Bucke, 3 vols. (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1964), 1:185–232. For an analysis of this impressive growth, see David Hempton, “Methodist Growth in Transatlantic Perspective, ca. 1770–1850,” in *Methodism and the Shaping of American Culture*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and John H. Wigger (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2001), 41–85. Gaustad says, “By 1800 Methodists ... numbered at least sixty-five thousand; in a single decade that number more than doubled, then doubled again by 1830; by 1850 the new nation found itself with over half a million Methodists and with far more Methodist churches than those of Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Lutherans combined” (Gaustad, *Faith of the Founders*, 123).

<sup>36</sup> Gaustad, *Faith of the Founders*, 123. The leading itinerant who spearheaded the advance of Methodism in America was Francis Asbury (1745–1816). For an overview and summary of the “circuit rider” Methodist preachers until 1820 see John H. Wigger, “Fighting Bees: Methodist Itinerants and the Dynamics of Methodist Growth, 1770–1820,” in ed. Hatch and Wigger, 87–133.

<sup>37</sup> Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 9; Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 153.

<sup>38</sup> John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 7.

<sup>39</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:9, 40–43.



Catholics served within their own institutions. Thus, by the end of the first half of the century, “the Roman Catholic Church had become the largest ecclesiastical body in the nation.”<sup>40</sup>

### The Second Great Awakening

The religious awakening that occurred in the United States during the post-American Revolution years and the first half of the nineteenth century was “the most influential revival of Christianity” on American soil.<sup>41</sup> The Second Great Awakening was an evangelistic effort to energize America against the influence of Deism and Unitarianism, and also to revitalize an interest in religion that seemed to be in decline.<sup>42</sup> The goals of the religious revivals were to present “aggressive evangelistic campaigns,” bring salvation to the unchurched, convince skeptics of the Christian truths, and transform the United States into a Christian nation.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 145–146; Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., with a foreword and concluding chapter by David D. Hall (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 8, cf. 546; Gaustad, *Historical Atlas*, 108.

<sup>41</sup> Noll, *A History of Christianity*, 166.

<sup>42</sup> Historians differ about the exact timing of the Second Great Awakening, but the most common dating has the period beginning around 1800 and extending to the 1830s (see William G. McLoughlin, “Revivalism,” in *The Rise of Adventism*, 134; also idem, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607–1977* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 98–140. Richard Carwardine argues for an extension of the period. He claims that between 1842 and 1844, “the general religious excitement ... brought enormous gains to all denominations, especially the Methodists,” which added over a quarter of million members. He then concludes that “in strictly statistical terms the peak of the Awakening came in this [Millerite] adventist phase of 1843–44” (Richard Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790–1865* [Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978], 52).

<sup>43</sup> J. R. Fitzmier, “Second Great Awakening,” in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, ed. Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 1067; Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 21; Knight, *William Miller*, 18.

These frequent and widespread religious revivals occurred in “a time of eager expectancy, unbridled enthusiasm, and restless ferment.”<sup>44</sup> Excitement was generated in church congregations throughout New England, the mid-Atlantic, the Northwest, and the South. The existing denominations, especially the free-will ones, grew in number, and several new American denominations were created. One important result of this new religious fervor was massive evangelical participation in social causes, especially abolitionism and temperance, which greatly influenced “most of America’s social reforms.”<sup>45</sup>

Scattered revivals first became evident among Congregationalists in the “more remote sections of New England” during the last part of the 1790s. By 1800, sufficient numbers of revivals had occurred in central and western New York that locals referred to that year as the year of “the great revival.”<sup>46</sup> However, historians usually consider the

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<sup>44</sup> Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 200.

<sup>45</sup> McLoughlin, “Revivalism,” 125, 145; idem, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 98–140.

<sup>46</sup> Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 150; Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800–1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950), 9. Cross points out that the “less sensational” and “more calm” spirit of the Awakening in western New York, compared with “the violent sensationalism of the southern frontiersmen” led historians to “more easily” forget the significance of New York in the explosion of the Second Great Awakening (7, 9). For accounts of several revivals in New England during the end of the eighteenth and early days of nineteenth-century, see Bennet Tyler, *New England Revivals, as They Existed at the Close of the Eighteenth, and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Centuries. Compiled Principally from Narratives First Published in the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* (Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts, 1980; Reprint of the 1846 ed. published by the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society of Boston). Sydney Ahlstrom notes, “[T]he first phase of the Second Awakening proper took place between 1797 and 1801, when many towns from Connecticut to New Hampshire felt refreshing showers” (Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 416).

beginning of the Second Great Awakening to be marked by events such as the 1801 Cane Ridge camp meeting in Kentucky and the impressive revival at Yale College in 1802.<sup>47</sup>

Initially, the Awakening mostly involved Kentucky and Tennessee, where Methodists and Baptists presided over “rowdy revivals,” though a “more sedate awakening” was seen among New England Congregationalists.<sup>48</sup> The East became more prominent in the second decade of the nineteenth century, when influential clergy such as Lyman Beecher began preaching the “New England theology,” which stressed the ability of humans to come to Christ, resulting in the founding of several institutions and societies “designed to evangelize and reform America.”<sup>49</sup> After 1825, Charles G. Finney became the main figure of revival-evangelism in America. Revivals then “became the standard American way of drawing a crowd and then building up the churches.” This was a result in part of their self-generated character. Instead of relying on the agency of the state or a religious authority, they relied “on the vigor, dedication, and persuasive skill of each revivalist.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The 1801 Cane Ridge camp meeting in Kentucky was a great Presbyterian (though some Methodist and Baptist ministers participated too) outdoor revival that occurred from August 6 through 12, 1801. Though it was a local event and not the first one, it reached attendance of “mammoth proportions” and ended up serving “as the medium which rocketed the institution on to the national religious landscape, thanks in part to the tremendous publicity of the ‘Pentecost’ at Cane Ridge” (Kenneth O. Brown, *Holy Ground, Too: The Camp Meeting Family Tree*, enl. and rev. ed. [Hazleton, PA: Holiness Archives, 1997], 6–7, cf. 27–28). For a comprehensive account and analysis of the Cane Ridge camp meeting, see Paul K. Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America’s Pentecost* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); and Ellen T. Eslinger, “The Great Revival in Bourbon County, Kentucky” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1988).

<sup>48</sup> Walters, *American Reformers*, 22.

<sup>49</sup> Noll, *A History of Christianity*, 169–170.

<sup>50</sup> Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World*, 84. A revival was generally understood as a series of meetings which focused more on “the emotional rather than the rational elements in religion and centered around the individual rather than on church organization or its government” (Charles C. Cole, Jr., *The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists, 1826–1860* [New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1954], 7).

## “New Theology” in Theory and Practice

A remarkable religious awakening happened at Yale in 1802 under the auspices of Timothy Dwight (grandson of Jonathan Edwards and president of Yale from 1795–1817). It is estimated that one-third of the students were converted as a direct result of the revivals at Yale, and many of these students later became leaders of the revival movement that spread around the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>51</sup> The most notable were Lyman Beecher (1775–1863), the “great organizer and promoter of the New England Awakening,” and Nathaniel W. Taylor (1786–1858), the “theologian who worked out the appeal and provided the intellectual defense.”<sup>52</sup> They worked to revive traditional American Presbyterianism and Congregationalism: Taylor became the chief architect of the “New Haven Theology” or the “New Divinity,” which strove to “create a bridge between eighteenth-century Calvinism” and the “revivalistic Arminianism” emphasis on free choice of the nineteenth-century,<sup>53</sup> while Beecher put

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<sup>51</sup> Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 150. Yale College (University) was founded in 1701, “as a bastion of religious orthodoxy in response to the ‘liberalization’ of Harvard” (Stephen Nissenbaum, ed., *The Great Awakening at Yale College* [Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1972], 8). For a brief but well documented account of religious revivals in Yale College from 1741 to 1858 see, John T. Wayland, *The Theological Department in Yale College, 1822–1858* (New York, NY: Garland, 1987), 366–376.

<sup>52</sup> Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 150. Beecher had left Yale before 1802. He had graduated in 1796/97 and spent a further year studying under Timothy Dwight. In 1795, Dwight had become Yale’s president, and was then responsible for revivals among its students. Beecher was one of Dwight’s first converts from “the French Enlightenment thinking then popular with Yale Students.” Dwight and Beecher then became lifelong friends. (John R. Wiers, “Beecher, Lyman,” in *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730–1860*, 2 vols. [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004], 1:76–77; cf. Charles E. Cuninghame, *Timothy Dwight, 1752–1817: A Biography* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1942), 293–334.

<sup>53</sup> George W. Harper, “Taylor, Nathaniel William,” in *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, 2:1086. For insightful analysis of the revision of Calvinism in the nineteenth century, see Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 227–329; and 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), 341–369. For a collection of

this theology into practice by becoming a leader in organizing “the converts of their revivals into missionary and reform societies to sustain the faith and order of the nation.”<sup>54</sup> Thus revival was connected with reform.

Beecher developed the concept of revitalizing the churches by putting converts to work in reform societies. Beecher bravely fought “the general state of public morals,” especially the treatment of the Indians, Sabbath-breaking, and intemperance.<sup>55</sup> His efforts and influence were widely seen. Theodore Parker (1810–1860), who devoted himself to a life of scholarship, preaching, and social action, considered Beecher to be “the father of more brains than any man in America.”<sup>56</sup> Beecher regarded the voluntary societies as “heaven-sent means of uniting the resources of all the churches behind every good cause.” Basically, all major societies enlisted Beecher’s “propagandist and promotional skill,” which made him, among the New Englanders, “the most important figure in ‘the benevolent empire.’”<sup>57</sup>

The revivalists of the Second Great Awakening were generally postmillennialists. They “assumed that an era of peace, justice, and goodness would precede the return of

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sermons and documents of the patriarchs of the New England Theology, see Douglas A. Sweeney and Allen C. Guelzo, eds., *The New England Theology: From Jonathan Edwards to Edwards Amasa Park* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006); also, Mark G. Toulouse and James O. Duke, eds., *Sources of Christian Theology in America* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 117–129; Sydney E. Ahlstrom, ed., *Theology in America: The Major Protestant Voices from Puritanism to Neo-Orthodoxy* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), 211–249.

<sup>54</sup> McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 111.

<sup>55</sup> Edward Farwell Hayward, *Lyman Beecher* (Boston, MA: Pilgrim Press, 1904), 69. An insightful analysis of Beecher activities and how impregnated they were with his religious roots of a millennial kingdom is given in Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 30–56, 86–90, 114–115, 155, 160.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Winthrop S. Hudson, *The Great Tradition of the American Churches* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1953), 63.

<sup>57</sup> Hudson, *The Great Tradition*, 78. Hudson calls Lyman Beecher “the real architect of the voluntary system in America” (Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 164).

Christ.”<sup>58</sup> Their goal, therefore, was to awaken the populace and summon them to battle against sin, and they started numerous reform movements and associations that “aimed at individual and social perfection.”<sup>59</sup> This millennial dream was also linked to the political arena; as Ralph Gabriel summarized, “The vision of the world saved by democracy was the secular version of the Protestant millennial hope.”<sup>60</sup> The climax of these reform movements was between the 1820s and 1840s.

### Foreign Missions

American religious enthusiasm could no longer “be contained within the national boundaries.”<sup>61</sup> Missionary societies had been established during the eighteenth century, but they were devoted almost entirely to home missions, aiming to evangelize Native Americans (“Indians”) and people on the southern frontiers.<sup>62</sup> However, in 1810 a group

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<sup>58</sup> Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 214. Charles Beecher points out that Lyman Beecher’s one idea in life was “the promotion of revivals of religion ... as a prominent instrumentality for the conversion of the world, and the speedy introduction of the millennial reign of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Charles Beecher, ed., *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher*, 2 vols. [New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1871], 2:9; quoted in Bernard A. Weisberger, *They Gathered at the River: The Story of the Great Revivalists and Their Impact Upon Religion in America* [Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1958], 69).

<sup>59</sup> Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 20; Knight, *William Miller*, 17.

<sup>60</sup> Ralph Henry Gabriel, *The Course of American Democratic Thought*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Ronald Press, 1956), 37. Winthrop Hudson points out that Charles Finney and Andrew Jackson represented a “parallel phenomena.” “They were parallel figures,” Hudson notes, “in that Finney represented the same tendencies in religious life as Jackson represented in political life.” They had “a similar constituency and a similar ideology.” Their “close identification with the unbridled hopes of the less wellborn and the less well-educated ... made them chief symbols of the political, social, and religious ferment of their time.” “In Finney and other Methodistic-type revivalists,” Hudson continues, “popular religion was blended with Jacksonian aspirations—the aspirations and hopes of common people” (Hudson, “A Time of Religious Ferment,” 4, 7).

<sup>61</sup> Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 167.

<sup>62</sup> For a history of several missionary societies in America prior to 1810, see Oliver Wendell Elsbree, “The Rise of the Missionary Spirit in America, 1790–1815” (PhD diss., Columbia University, New York, 1928; facsimile published, Williamsport, PA: Williamsport Printing and Binding, 1928); also Charles

of Congregationalist church leaders in Massachusetts organized the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), the first successful agency dedicated to mission in foreign lands, and for the next several decades, the largest organization sending missionaries abroad.<sup>63</sup> Leaders from other groups, such as Reformed Christians and Presbyterians, joined the ABCFM, and in 1812 their first missionaries sailed to India.<sup>64</sup> In 1814, the Baptists formed the Baptist Mission Board, and by mid century, all of the mainline churches had their own well-established mission boards and societies.<sup>65</sup> This reflected the great missionary impulse among Protestants in Europe during the first half of the nineteenth-century, and the “larger transatlantic evangelical movement encompassing the English-speaking world.”<sup>66</sup>

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L. Chaney, *The Birth of Missions in America* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 154–179.

<sup>63</sup> Wilbert R. Shenk, “Introduction,” in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810–1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy*, ed., idem, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 1; William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 45. For a history of the ABCFM and its development in following years, see William E. Strong, ed., *The Story of the American Board: An Account of the First Hundred Years of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston, MA: Pilgrim Press, 1910); also Clifton Jackson Phillips, *Protestant America and the Pagan World: The First Half Century of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1810–1860* (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1969).

<sup>64</sup> It is argued that the ABCFM, though not officially bound to creedal affirmations, was a New Divinity creation, rooted in its theology and inspired by its revivals. See David W. Kling, “The New Divinity and the Origins of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,” *Church History* 72.4 (2003): 791–819; repr. *North America Foreign Missions, 1810–1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 11–38; cf. Wolfgang Eberhard Lowe, “The First American Foreign Missionaries: ‘The Students,’ 1810–1820. An Inquiry into Their Theological Motives” (PhD diss., Brown University, 1962).

<sup>65</sup> P. E. Pierson, “Missions, Protestant Mainline Foreign,” in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, 754.

<sup>66</sup> Kling, in ed., Shenk, 15; Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1964), 261–321.

## Charles Grandison Finney

One of the greatest preachers of the Second Great Awakening, Charles Finney (1792–1875) appeared in the later years of the movement. He is considered the inaugurator of “a new era in American revivalism.”<sup>67</sup> Finney knew how to persuade an audience. His sermons had a personal intensity and a democratic spirit; he invited people from any denominational background to convert. He used examples from daily life as homiletic devices, addressed the common people directly, and made frequent use of the personal pronoun “you” instead of the general “they.”<sup>68</sup> Finney either introduced or popularized new methods of evangelism such as “protracted meetings” (religious meetings that continued for many successive days), “anxious seat” (the near-converted could move up front directly below the pulpit when they felt ready for conversion), the use of young laymen as preachers, and allowing women to testify about their experiences and pray in public.<sup>69</sup> Finney was also successful in combining evangelism and reform.<sup>70</sup>

Finney was a postmillennialist. In the 1830s, he said, rebuking Christians for neglecting to do their part but also with a tone of optimism, that “if the church will do her

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<sup>67</sup> William G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York, NY: Ronald Press, 1959), 11.

<sup>68</sup> Weisberger, 102–103.

<sup>69</sup> Nancy Hardesty argues that Finney’s revivals were responsible, “at least in part,” for an increase of women in the nineteenth century beginning “to fill new roles as pastors, preachers, evangelists, exhorters, and lecturers” (Nancy Ann Hardesty, “‘Your Daughters Shall Prophesy:’ Revivalism and Feminism in the Age of Finney” [PhD diss., University of Chicago Divinity School, 1976], 160–161).

<sup>70</sup> Keith J. Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney, 1792–1875: Revivalist and Reformer* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987), xiii. Finney, however, was convinced that men must be reformed from within, and that conversion, not laws, would perfect society (McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 129).



duty, the millennium may come in this country in three years.”<sup>71</sup> He definitely rejected the premillennialist implication that the world was getting worse.<sup>72</sup>

### The “Burned-over District”

In the 1830s, the Second Awakening was taking shape in central and western New York.<sup>73</sup> Charles Finney became the leading preacher of the Awakening during this time, although it was not the work of a single man. The most famous of Finney’s revivals took place in Rochester during the winter of 1830–1831.<sup>74</sup> Upper New York State became home to so much religious excitement that it became known as the “burned-over district.”<sup>75</sup> This region gave birth to or nurtured diverse religious groups like the Shakers, Mormons, Millerites, and Spiritualists, as well as a variety of utopian movements.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1835), 282; Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, rev. and enl. (Oberlin, OH: E. J. Goodrich, 1868), 290. According to Finney, had the church done its part faithfully the millennium could have already come, “If the whole church as a body had gone to work ten years ago, and continued it as a few individuals, whom I could name, have done, there would not now have been an impenitent sinner in the land. The millennium would have fully come in the United States before this day” (Finney, *Lectures on Revivals* [1868], 289).

<sup>72</sup> McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, 105–106; Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 18.

<sup>73</sup> Whitney Cross points out to the “distinct peaks of fervor” in upstate New York. After the first climax of 1800 “excitement diminished, rose again to a lesser peak in 1807–1808,” slumped during the war years, but following the War of 1812 the “religious upheavals . . . surpassed all previous experiences,” although proportionately the number of converts “may have been smaller than in 1800.” The postwar waves of enthusiasm declined by 1820, but after reaching another low point the “strenuous evangelism” reached “a grand climax between 1825 and 1837” (Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 10–13; cf. 30).

<sup>74</sup> Hudson, *The Great Tradition*, 90; Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper’s Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815–1837* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1978), 4–5, 13–16, 95–115, 140–141; Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 154–155, 168–169.

<sup>75</sup> The most complete treatment of revivalism in western New York during the first half of the nineteenth century is given in Cross, *The Burned-over District*.

<sup>76</sup> For an examination of the relationship between millenarianism and utopianism, using the Millerites and Oneidaites in New York as a test-case, see Michael Barkun, *Crucible of the Millennium: The Burned-over District of New York in the 1840s* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986). Barkun argues that “catastrophic stress” such as natural disasters along with economic and social turmoil “played a

## New Religious Movements

The nineteenth-century in the United States was a propitious era for the development and strengthening of new religious movements. Some of them were transported from Europe, while others were indigenous. While many of these movements grew enormously during the nineteenth century, many others only began in that period. This section is not comprehensive; it will only mention those religious movements that had a great impact on American life or a connection to James White and Ellen Harmon.

### Restorationism

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a religious philosophy of restoring Christianity to its primitive, New Testament, condition began to emerge in the United States. The formalization of the Restoration movement was possibly the most lasting legacy of the famous revival in Cane Ridge.<sup>77</sup> The Restorationists focused on making a commitment to the Bible (specifically the New Testament) as the *only* guidebook for the faith and practice of the church (they objected to creeds). They strongly emphasized Christian unity and local church autonomy as opposed to the organization of

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pivotal role in inducing people to abandon old loyalties in favor of an imminent millennium” (p. ix). He recognizes the dissimilar structure of chiliasm (belief in the imminent consummation of human history) and utopianism, but argues for similarities in what precedes these movements (e.g., catastrophes, adversities), and their philosophical trend of “millenarian aspirations,” where there is a rejection of “the imperfections of the status quo in favor of radical transformation.” Barkun rightly emphasizes their ideological difference; while religious chiliasts “awaited a millennium-in-macrocosm” and “sought to convert an erring world before it ended,” utopian experimenters “tried to create a new world of their own,” a “millennium-in-microcosm” (pp. 3–10).

<sup>77</sup> Nathan Hatch says, “In 1802, in the wake of the Cane Ridge Revival in Kentucky, [Barton] Stone decided he could no longer live under Presbyterian doctrine or church organization. A year later, he and five other ministries pushed this idea to its logical extreme and proclaimed that ... all church structures were suspect, ... [and] these men vowed to follow nothing but the Christian name and the New Testament” (Nathan O. Hatch, “The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People,” *Journal of American History* 67 (1980): 549–550).

denominations (e.g., conferences, etc.).<sup>78</sup> The central figures in the movement were Elias Smith in New England, James O’Kelly in Virginia, Barton Stone in Kentucky, and Alexander Campbell in Pennsylvania.<sup>79</sup> In 1808, Elias Smith from the Christian (Connexion) Church founded the first religious newspaper in the United States, the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.<sup>80</sup> Eventually other religious movements made use of journals and newspapers, which became widespread and were avidly read.<sup>81</sup>

The Restorationist or “Christian” movement questioned “traditional authorities and exalted the right of the people to think for themselves.”<sup>82</sup> Several churches originated from this movement, such as the Disciples of Christ, a number of independent Churches of Christ, and other smaller groups.<sup>83</sup> This philosophy of freedom of thinking invited “fresh appraisals of the popular culture” and opened the religious environment for some

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<sup>78</sup> J. B. North, “Restoration Movement,” in *Dictionary of Christianity* (1990), 1005.

<sup>79</sup> Hatch, “The Christian Movement,” 547; idem, “Sola Scriptura and Novus Ordo Seclorum,” in *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1982), 71. For a list of several primary and secondary sources, see Hatch, “The Christian Movement,” 548–551. A reference work containing the history and the most significant individuals, events, and teachings of the movement is, Douglas A. Foster and others, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

<sup>80</sup> Hatch, “The Christian Movement,” 547–548; idem, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 70. For a comprehensive history of the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, see J. Pressley Barrett, ed., *The Centennial of Religious Journalism* (Dayton, OH: Christian Publishing Association, 1908).

<sup>81</sup> Robert T. Handy, “The Protestant Quest for a Christian America,” in *American Church History: A Reader*, ed. Henry Warner Bowden and P. C. Kemeny (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 51; Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 103–109.

<sup>82</sup> Hatch, “The Christian Movement,” 565–566.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America’s Pentecost*, 4, 128, 132–133, 147–148. For a summarized but insightful history of the movement and its branches see North, “Restoration Movement,” 1005–1008. An insightful analysis of the “cultural roots” of the “Christian” or “Disciples of Christ” denomination is given in Hatch, “The Christian Movement,” 545–567; cf. idem, “Sola Scriptura and Novus Ordo Seclorum,” 59–78, especially 71–74; cf. Holifield, *Theology in America*, 291–305.

laymen and ministers, such as William Miller, John Humphrey Noyes, and Joseph Smith, to follow their own convictions and hermeneutics.<sup>84</sup>

This new pragmatic theological approach, “which made no man the judge of another’s conscience, had little holding power and sent many early advocates scrambling for surer footing.” Among the five men who signed the “Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery,” only Stone retained his identity as a Christian. Two of them returned to the Presbyterians, and the other two became Shakers. Elias Smith left the Christian Connection in 1818 to join the Universalists, and two of his colleagues, Joshua V. Himes and Joseph Marsh, later became Millerites, while Alexander Campbell “saw his best preacher, Sidney Rigdon, defect to the Mormons.”<sup>85</sup>

As noted above, James White’s father, John White, eventually joined the Christian Connexion church. James described his father as firm and zealous in his religious experience, but free “from that bigotry which prevents investigation and advancement.” In his continuous study of the Bible, John felt attracted to the Restorationist tradition, which was “more liberal and scriptural than those of the Calvinistic Baptists.” He actively served the church as a deacon for many years. James was born and raised into this Christian tradition, was baptized at fifteen, became an itinerant Millerite preacher in the early 1840s and was at that time ordained to the ministry of the Christian Connexion denomination.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Hatch, “The Christian Movement,” 547–548.

<sup>85</sup> Hatch, “Christian Movement,” 565.

<sup>86</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 10–11, 15, 104.

## Unitarianism and Universalism

Beginning in the eighteenth century, several anti-Calvinist movements proliferated in America. They varied in their approach to Calvinism from a mild adjustment to a total refutation.<sup>87</sup> According to William Sweet this “anti-Calvinistic revolt” was a product of two major influences: first, the financial prosperity of some Boston merchants, which convinced them that “they were masters of their own fates and captains of their own souls” and not “helpless and impotent puppets in the hands of Calvin’s arbitrary God,” and second, “an anti-revival party,” that emerged under the leadership of Charles Chauncy, who became Universalist toward the end of his life.<sup>88</sup>

The American Unitarian Association was formed in 1825 and numbered 125 churches, most of them within forty miles of Boston.<sup>89</sup> Lyman Beecher, who came to

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<sup>87</sup> For a description and analysis of this anti-Calvinistic thought revealed in movements such as Unitarianism, Universalism, freewill churches, Restorationism, liberalism, etc, see William Warren Sweet, *Religion in the Development of American Culture* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1952), 190–233; cf. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*.

<sup>88</sup> Sweet, *Religion in the Development of American Culture*, 190–191. Charles Chauncy (1705–1787) was an American Congregational clergyman in Boston, which became one of the most influential of the eighteenth-century. He was the great-grandson of Charles Chauncy (1592–1672, who was president of Harvard College during 1654–1672), and graduated from Harvard in 1721. He openly distrusted emotionalism and avidly opposed the revivalist preaching exposed in the Great Awakening especially by Jonathan Edwards. For a biography and analysis of Chauncy’s thought, see Edward M. Griffin, *Old Brick, Charles Chauncy of Boston, 1705–1787* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1980); Charles H. Lippy, *Seasonable Revolutionary: The Mind of Charles Chauncy* (Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall, 1981); Williston Walker, *Ten New England Leaders* (New York, NY: Silver, Burdett and Company, 1901; reprint ed. New York, NY: Arno Press, 1969), 267–310. For a defense of Universalism, see Charles Chauncy, *Salvation for All Men: Illustrated and Vindicated as a Scripture Doctrine in Numerous Abstracts from a Variety of Pious and Learned Men, Who Have Purposely Writ upon the Subject* (Boston, MA: T. and J. Eleet, 1782; reprint ed. [Hicksville, NY: Regina Press, 1975], 1–26).

<sup>89</sup> Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 172. For the history of Unitarianism in America, see George Willis Cooke, *Unitarianism in America: A History of Its Origin and Development* (Boston, MA: American Unitarian Association, 1902); also Joseph Henry Allen and Richard Eddy, *A History of the Unitarians and the Universalists in the United States* (New York, NY: Christian Literature, 1894). For an overview of their history and theology, see Conrad Wright, *The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America*

Boston in 1826 as pastor of the Hanover Street Church, claimed, “All the literary men of Massachusetts ... [and] all the trustees and professors of Harvard College were Unitarian.” Unitarian churches were crowded with “all the elite of wealth and fashion.”<sup>90</sup>

Universalism had its genesis in America through the teachings of the English clergyman John Murray (1741–1850), who arrived in America in 1770.<sup>91</sup> It did not prosper, however, until after the Baptist minister Elhanan Winchester (1751–1797) was converted in 1781. Under the leadership of Hosea Ballou (1771–1852), the Universalists adopted an antitrinitarian position and “except for social status, became indistinguishable from the Unitarians.”<sup>92</sup> Unitarianism “was the faith of well-to-do, urban New Englanders who rejected the notion of human depravity,” while “Universalism was its counter part among less urbane, rural folk who were repelled by the idea of eternal damnation” and thus affirmed the doctrine of universal salvation.<sup>93</sup> They were basically “in fundamental agreement”: the Universalists held that “God was too good to damn man” and the Unitarians insisted that “man was too good to be damned.”<sup>94</sup>

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(Boston, MA: Starr King Press, 1955). For an insightful summarized presentation of American Unitarianism, see Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 388–402.

<sup>90</sup> Sweet, *Religion in the Development of American Culture*, 192. An attempt to describe the Unitarian mindset that prevailed at Harvard and greatly influenced the clergyman trained there for the first half of the nineteenth century is given in Daniel Walker Howe, *The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805-1861* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

<sup>91</sup> Murray was born in a strict Calvinist home (his father was Anglican and his mother Presbyterian), but later he found “delight in religious themes and exercises” of the Methodists. John Wesley appointed him “class-leader of forty boys” and soon he began preaching. Later he joined the Whitefield congregation, but was disfellowshipped when he accepted the teachings of the Universalists (Allen and Eddy, *A History of the Unitarians*, 388–389).

<sup>92</sup> Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 172. John Murray, “the founder of American Universalism,” was a Trinitarian (Allen and Eddy, *A History of the Unitarians*, 392).

<sup>93</sup> Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 172.

<sup>94</sup> Sweet, *Religion in the Development of American Culture*, 197.

Universalism, being a lower-class denomination, was mainly propagated by “self-educated farmer-preachers” who competed with the Free-Will Baptists and Methodists for the allegiance of ordinary people and the unchurched. Initially concentrated in rural New England, Universalists later “moved into the newer settlements of the West” and were so successful that by the middle of the century “they had more than twice as many churches as the Unitarians.”<sup>95</sup>

Universalist preachers, upholding the doctrine of universal salvation, were among the greatest opposers of Millerism. Several times the young preacher James White was defamed or publicly confronted by some of them.<sup>96</sup>

### Mormonism

The Mormon Church was founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805–1844) after he reported receiving a series of “revelations” and discovering a set of gold plates. From the plates, Smith translated the *Book of Mormon* (first published in 1830), which became “the scripture of the new church.”<sup>97</sup> Smith and almost all of the early leaders were from

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<sup>95</sup> Sweet, *Religion in the Development of American Culture*, 197; Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 172; Noll, *A History of Christianity*, 150.

<sup>96</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 75–82, 99–102.

<sup>97</sup> Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 2–3. For a summary of the history of the *Book of Mormon* and its content, see pp. 20–40. Probably the most complete work about the Mormons and produced by one of their own, is B[ri]gham] H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Century I*, 6 vols. (Provo, UT: published by the Church, Brigham Young University Press, 1965, c1957), these volumes are a revised edition of “History of the Mormon Church,” published in the *Americana* [monthly periodical published by the American Historical Society] from 1909 to 1915. For a critical biography of Smith, see Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev. and enl. (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1995). For insightful views of Smith and the Mormons in the context of nineteenth-century America see, Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom’s Ferment: Phases of American Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War* (Minnesota, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1944; repr., New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1962), 86–107; Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 138–150; cf. Whitney R. Cross, “Mormonism in the ‘Burned-over District,’” *New York History* 25 (July 1944), 326–338.

New England, a nest of enthusiastic religion in the nineteenth-century. Initially the movement attracted “the poor, restless, and dissatisfied, those who succumbed eagerly to religious emotionalism and those whose fortunes were at low ebb.”<sup>98</sup>

Smith’s “religious innovations,” which included plural marriage,<sup>99</sup> in addition to his engagement in the presidential campaign of 1844, caused discontent among some and provoked fierce struggles between Smith’s followers and their neighbors. In 1844, Smith and several other Mormon leaders were brutally murdered by angry shooters while they were in jail in Nauvoo, Illinois.<sup>100</sup> After the death of Smith, Brigham Young, president of the Twelve, “claimed that this body should now rule the church,” and though there was a certain amount of splintering, the affairs of the church were placed in the hands of Young and the Twelve.<sup>101</sup> In 1847, Brigham Young and his followers arrived in the Great Salt Lake Valley, where soon they founded Salt Lake City and several other settlements, which were the beginning of the “Mormon Empire.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Tyler, *Freedom’s Ferment*, 86. Tyler comments that the success of the first Mormon missionaries sent to England was the fact that they “found a vast reservoir of new adherents in the poorer districts of English factory towns, where discontent and superstition combined to make conversion easy, especially when land was promised to all who would migrate.” About ten thousand were converted during 1838–1843, and an emigration agency was set up in Liverpool, where the church provided aid for those too poor to emigrate. The population of Nauvoo, Illinois, changed from nine thousand in 1841 to about fifteen thousand in 1845 (p. 103).

<sup>99</sup> Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 334–347, 457–488; Jeffery Ogden Johnson, “Determining and Defining ‘Wife’: The Brigham Young Households,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20.3 (Fall 1987): 57–70; Stanley P. Hirshson, *The Lion of the Lord: A Biography of Brigham Young* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 184–223. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints discontinued polygamy officially in 1890, with the official declaration by Wilford Woodruff (1807–1898), who was their fourth president from 1889 until his death (cf. O’Dea, *The Mormons*, 111, 117, 169, 172, 179, 247–248).

<sup>100</sup> O’Dea, *The Mormons*, 68–69, 72–73; Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 392–395.

<sup>101</sup> O’Dea, *The Mormons*, 70.

<sup>102</sup> O’Dea, *The Mormons*, 81–83, cf. 76ff. Several Mormon dissident groups were organized, but most of them had short lives. The only group among the dissidents that became large and important was the one that met as the “New Organization of the Church” in 1852. They won the adherence of Smith’s



Since Mormons believed in the doctrine of the perpetuity of spiritual gifts, there were some who, for lack of information or simply with the intent of defaming the Sabbatarian Adventists, confused James and Ellen as Mormons. This led Ellen, in 1860, to write an autobiographical work to clarify her experience in connection with Adventism and the third angel's message and not with Mormonism. Seventh-day Adventists were also, in their early days, occasionally wrongly called Mormons. Since there is no doctrinal connection between Adventists and Mormons, Adventists often exposed their doctrinal differences in order to correct the misunderstanding.<sup>103</sup>

### Millerism

Millerism was a movement that spread in America during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, under the leadership of William Miller, a Baptist farmer.<sup>104</sup> The

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immediate family, and were organized in 1860 in Amboy, Illinois. Smith's son Joseph Smith III (who was 11 years old in 1844) became its president. Lately this church has adopted some new practices, such as open communion and ordination of women to the priesthood (see p.248).

<sup>103</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:iv; [James] W[hite], "Our Present Position," *RH*, December 1850, 14; [James] W[hite], "Western Tour," *RH*, April 12, 1860, 164; James White, "Eastern Tour," *RH*, January 5, 1868, 13; Knight, *Ellen White's World*, 60–61; cf. "Misstatements Corrected," *RH*, March 22, 1864, 132–133; M. E. Cornell, "Who Are Mormons?" *RH*, April 7, 1863, 149; idem, "Who Are Mormons?," March 22, 1864, 134; I. D. Van Horn, "Report from Ohio," *RH*, January 29, 1867, 91.

<sup>104</sup> Miller and the Millerites have been studied by many scholars both Adventists and non-Adventists. The most significant works are Miller, *Wm. Miller's Apology and Defence*; Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*; both works were reprinted in Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*; with an introduction by Merlin D. Burt (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2005); Isaac C. Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People* (Yarmouth, ME: Isaac C. Wellcome, 1874); repr., in idem, *Second Advent History*; with an introduction by Gary Land (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2008); James White, *Sketches of the Christian Life and Public Labors of William Miller: Gathered From His Memoir by the Late Sylvester Bliss, and From Other Sources* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1875); Everett N. Dick, "The Advent Crisis of 1843-1844" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1930); a published version of Dick's revised dissertation is idem, *William Miller and the Advent Crisis, 1831–1844*, with a Foreword and Historiographical Essay by Gary Land, ed. Gary Land (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1994); Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry: A Defense of the Character and Conduct of William Miller and the Millerites, Who Mistakenly Believed that the Second Coming of Christ Would Take Place in the Year 1844* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1944); LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and

movement flourished under the strong waves of the nineteenth-century Awakening, and the Millerites began to develop a unique system of historicist premillennial prophetic interpretation. While many other religious groups arose from emotionalism (which usually led to antinomianism or perfectionist idealism) or new revelations, Miller was led to a more literal and rational study of biblical prophecies.

Miller, who was raised a Baptist, later became disillusioned with the Bible and Christianity and eventually became a Deist. The denial of a future existence and the doctrine of non-involvement of God in human affairs held by the skeptics made Miller rethink his beliefs. In a dramatic conversion, he turned back to the Bible and Christianity in 1816, and initiated a systematic and persistent Bible study over several years. He eventually became one of the leading exponents of premillennialism in America in the first half of the nineteenth century. Based on a historicist biblical hermeneutic and using the year-day principle in prophetic interpretation, Miller concluded by 1818 that the Second Coming of Jesus would be personal and imminent, and that “in about twenty-five years the glory of the Lord would be revealed, and all flesh see it together.”<sup>105</sup> To resolve

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Herald, 1946–1954), 4:429–876; David T. Arthur, “‘Come Out of Babylon’: A Study of Millerite Separatism and Denominationalism, 1840–1865” (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 1970); idem, “Millerism,” in *The Rise of Adventism*, 154–172; David L. Rowe, “Thunder and Trumpets: The Millerite Movement and Apocalyptic Thought in Upstate New York, 1800–1845” (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1974); idem, *Thunder and Trumpets: Millerites and Dissenting Religion in Upstate New York, 1800–1850* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985); Ruth Alden Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1987); Knight, *Millennial Fever*; Knight, *William Miller*; Ellen G. White, *William Miller: Herald of the Blessed Hope* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994); David L. Rowe, *God’s Strange Work: William Miller and the End of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008); Cross, *Burned-over District*, 287–321; Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, eds., *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1993). A popularly written history that though considering Miller “an honest and sincere man,” tends to ridicule the movement is given in Clara Endicott Sears, *Days of Delusion: A Strange Bit of History* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1924). An insightful chronological review of works on Millerism is given in Gary Land, “The Historians and the Millerites: An Historiographical Essay,” xiii–xxviii; repr. in *AUSS* 32.3 (Autumn 1994): 227–246.

<sup>105</sup> Miller, *Apology and Defence*, 12.

the objections that arose in his mind concerning his findings, he dedicated more years to restudying the matter. In 1822, he confidently claimed that Christ's return would take place "on or before 1843."<sup>106</sup>

The Millerite movement was not a one-man phenomenon. Miller began preaching publicly in 1831, and by the end of the decade, several other leaders had joined him. Some of the foremost personalities in this movement were Joshua Himes,<sup>107</sup> Josiah Litch,<sup>108</sup> and Charles Fitch.<sup>109</sup> With the help of other ministers and prominent premillennialist reformers, Millerism rapidly "developed into the most spectacular evangelistic crusade of the Middle Period."<sup>110</sup> Moreover, besides being "America's most significant millenarian expression," the rise of Millerism, with its thousands of converts, marked the climax of the Second Awakening.<sup>111</sup> When the Second Coming of Jesus did

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<sup>106</sup> Bliss, *Memoirs*, 79.

<sup>107</sup> Joshua Vaughan Himes (1805–1890) was a minister of the Christian Connexion in Boston who became crucial in introducing Miller to the large cities and revolutionizing the movement by launching several periodicals and organizing camp-meetings, general conferences, etc. See David Tallmadge Arthur, "Joshua V. Himes and the Cause of Adventism, 1839–1845" (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1963); David T. Arthur, "Joshua V. Himes and the Cause of Adventism," in *The Disappointed*, ed. Numbers and Butler, 36–58.

<sup>108</sup> Josiah Litch (1809–1886), a Methodist minister, accepted Millerism by 1838, being the first New England well-known minister to take his stand with William Miller. Next to Miller, the Millerite movement had in Josiah Litch, its leading theologian. See *SDA Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Litch, Josiah"; Jerry Moon, "Josiah Litch: Herald of 'The Advent Near'" (Term paper, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 1973).

<sup>109</sup> Charles Fitch (1805–1844) was a Congregational Church minister who designed together with Apollos Hale in 1843, *A Chronological Chart of the Visions of Daniel & John*, which was of a great help in preaching the prophetic scheme.

<sup>110</sup> Gabriel, *The Course of American Democratic Thought*, 36.

<sup>111</sup> David L. Rowe, "Millerites: A Shadow Portrait," in *The Disappointed*, ed. Numbers and Butler, 15; Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism*, 52.

not occur in the fall of 1844 as the Millerites had preached, there was a great split in the group, and out of that chaos several denominations arose.<sup>112</sup>

The Millerite movement was the greatest religious influence in the life of James and Ellen during the early 1840s. They did not know each other at that time, but both accepted the message of the soon coming of Jesus as proclaimed by Miller and his followers. The urgency and imminence of the message led James to become an itinerant preacher, and the adolescent Ellen became active in her community in Portland, participating in prayer meetings, arranging religious gatherings with young friends, and publically relating her experience. Their experience in the movement changed their lives forever. When the second coming of Jesus did not take place in 1844, they continued firm in the belief in a premillennial, literal, and soon appearance of Jesus, but renounced any

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<sup>112</sup> For further study on denominations that grew out of the Millerite movement, see Albert C. Johnson, *Advent Christian History: A Concise Narrative of the Origin and Progress, Doctrine and Work of this Body of Believers* (Boston, MA: Advent Christian Publication Society, 1918); Raymond J. Bean, "The Influence of William Miller in the History of American Christianity" (Th.D. diss., Boston University, 1949); Arthur, "Come Out of Babylon," 84–371; David A. Dean, "Echoes of the Midnight Cry: The Millerite Heritage in the Apologetics of the Advent Christian Denomination, 1860–1960" (Th.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1977); Clyde E. Hewitt, *Midnight and Morning: An Account of the Adventist Awakening and the Founding of the Advent Christian Denomination, 1831–1860* (Charlotte, NC: Venture Books, 1983); Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 283–289, 327–342; Knight, *William Miller*, 241–246, 277–290; Burt, "The Historical Background, Interconnected Development and Integration of the Doctrines of the Sanctuary, the Sabbath, and Ellen G. White's Role in Sabbatarian Adventism from 1844 to 1849" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2002), 60–265. For the history of Seventh-day Adventists, see J. N. Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists with Tokens of God's Hand in the Movement and a Brief Sketch of the Advent Cause from 1831 to 1844* (Battle Creek, MI: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1892); idem, *The Great Second Advent Movement, Its Rise and Progress* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1905); M. Ellsworth Olsen, *A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1925); Arthur W. Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1961–1962); Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, 4:855–905, 941–1137; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Tell It to the World: The Story of Seventh-day Adventists*, rev. ed. (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1977); P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977); Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, rev. ed. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000).

further attempt to determine a specific date for the Second Coming.<sup>113</sup> They united their efforts in preaching the message, which led to the organization of a global Adventist movement. As noted by Gaustad, the Great Disappointment, thus, “instead of weakening denominational life, added to its panoply such stalwarts as the Seventh-day Adventists.”<sup>114</sup>

## Spiritualism

Another movement that arose in the northeastern United States in the nineteenth-century in America was that of modern spiritualism. The beginning of this movement is dated to 1848, when, in a house in Hydesville, New York, the Fox sisters claimed to communicate through a series of knocking sounds with what they believed to be the spirit of a dead man. The phenomenon gained popularity, as many believed that they could communicate with spirits of dead persons, especially during the time of the American Civil War.<sup>115</sup> Despite opposition from religious leaders in the pulpits, and from articles in newspapers and scientific journals,<sup>116</sup> some leaders of social reform movements in America practiced or were sympathetic to spiritualism.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> James extended his expectation to the fall of 1845, but accepted a revelation given to Ellen that Jesus would not come in 1845, and thus he was saved from another disappointment ([James White], n.t., *A Word to the “Little Flock,”* 22). He then joined Ellen in combating date-setting for the Coming of Jesus.

<sup>114</sup> Gaustad, *Faith of the Founders*, 126.

<sup>115</sup> For a helpful study on the impact of spiritualism in the Civil War, see Jud Lake, *A Nation in God’s Hand: Ellen White and the Civil War* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2017), 361–392.

<sup>116</sup> For a helpful study on the opposition spiritualism faced in America, see Stephen D. Andrews, “Which Threatens to Tear Our Fabric Asunder: The Opposition to American Spiritualism, 1848–1860” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2005). Both James and Ellen White, through their writings and teachings, vehemently combated spiritualism and its influence (see James White, *The Signs of the Times, Showing that the Second Coming of Christ Is at the Doors: Spirit Manifestations, a Foretold Sign that the Day of God’s Wrath Hasteth Greatly* [Rochester, NY: Review Office, 1853]; James White, *The Signs of the Times, Showing that the Second Coming of Christ Is at the Doors: Spiritualism, a Foretold Sign that the Day of*

## Social Reform Movements

The nineteenth century was a time of social reform in the United States, and the initial decades of the century witnessed the proliferation of societies for the promotion of a host of social and religious causes. “As early as 1815,” Walters points out, “Americans had begun to generate what would be the most fervent and diverse outburst of reform energy in American history.”<sup>118</sup> These societies’s agendas included missions, education, temperance, manual labor, and so on.

Most of the societies were initially local, but within a relatively short period they were “replaced by organizations national in scope.”<sup>119</sup> Unlike the eighteenth-century protests, which “were typically short-lived, regionally contained, shaped by local traditions of collective action, and motivated by parochial concerns,” the nineteenth-century protests “were increasingly sustained, interregional ... and motivated by *national*

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*God's Wrath Hasteth Greatly* [Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1862]; Herbert Edgar Douglass, *Dramatic Prophecies of Ellen White: Stories of World Events Divinely Foretold* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2007], 23–44; Julius Nam, “Spiritualism,” *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*).

<sup>117</sup> For a history of spiritualism in America and its influence in social and reform movements, see Ernest J. Isaacs, “A History of Nineteenth-century American Spiritualism as a Religious and Social Movement” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1975); Richard K. Silver, “The Spiritual Kingdom in America: The Influence of Emanuel Swedenborg on American Society and Culture, 1815–1860” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1983); Bret E. Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997); Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Woman’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001).

<sup>118</sup> Walters, *American Reformers*, xiii. Insightful sources on the history of social reform in the United States include Tyler, *Freedom’s Ferment*; Walters, *American Reformers*; and Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*.

<sup>119</sup> Hudson, *The Great Tradition*, 72. Hudson mentions, for example, “the American Bible Society (1816), the American Colonization Society ([1816] 1817), the American Sunday School Union (1824), the American Temperance Society (1826), the American Home Missionary Society (1826), the American Education Society (1827), the American Peace Society (1828), the American Seamen’s Friend Society (1828), the American Tract Society (1828), the American Anti-Slavery Society (1833), and others too numerous to mention.”

*and special purposes.*”<sup>120</sup> Though the major Protestant denominations had many differences, they recognized the ties that bound them together, especially their responsibility for fighting against sin in society. They realized that their work consisted of more than evangelism: it also included remaking society. Furthermore, the Awakening stressed a doctrine of “disinterested benevolence” as the key to Christian social responsibility. These factors converged to give distinctive character, direction, and force to the voluntary societies.<sup>121</sup> These social and humanitarian movements were generally motivated by a conviction that human beings through their efforts could and must improve society, and that “the individual was capable of moral redemption and ultimate perfection.”<sup>122</sup>

Before the 1820s, just a few people had been able to live entirely devoted to social or moral causes. Reform was more commonly a sideline for those who had high social positions. The technological and social changes of the nineteenth century, however, made it possible for large numbers of Americans “to make a livelihood out of agitation.”<sup>123</sup> The nation’s victory in the War of 1812 increased American confidence in progress and human will. Changes in both the theological and economic realms led many Americans to assume “that individual effort mattered” and that they could change the world. The religious revivalism of the nineteenth century encouraged an “optimistic and activist

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<sup>120</sup> Young, “Confessional Protest,” 660. Italics in the original.

<sup>121</sup> Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 163–164.

<sup>122</sup> Walter Hugins, “Introduction,” in *The Reform Impulse, 1825–1850*, ed. Walter Hugins (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), 1.

<sup>123</sup> Walters, *American Reformers*, 13. Walters mentions the example of William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879), one of the founders of the American Anti-Slavery Society, “which for thirty-five years [January 1, 1831–January 1, 1866] consisted primarily of editing a reform newspaper,” an “unthinkable idea” in previous years.

spirit,” making Americans enthusiastic about the idea that “good deeds were the mark of godliness,” and it prepared the world for the imminent millennium.<sup>124</sup>

The optimistic vision that led Americans to revolutionize in several areas (transportation, expansion, industrialization) also influenced their “thinking about man’s relationship to God and society.” The idea that Americans “might create a heaven on earth” inspired Christians to fight for the elimination of all “vestiges of evil and corruption” in the nation. This resulted in the proliferation of “reformist zeal and activity” in the second quarter of the century.<sup>125</sup> However, religious benevolence also became “an endeavor by a conservative elite to use morality as a means of social control over the population in a changing America.”<sup>126</sup> A large number of nineteenth-century evangelists and revivalists spent the bulk of their time and effort “engaged in public campaigns,” and used every tool, such as “sermon, book, pamphlet, diary, and letter” to express their views concerning political, economic, and social issues, which “helped to mold the opinions and prejudices of a large body of the American public.”<sup>127</sup>

The first national social movements were the ones for temperance and the abolition of slavery, which “emerged in interaction with religious and civil institutions, not the state.”<sup>128</sup> These “special-purpose” societies began to grow in popular appeal by

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<sup>124</sup> Walters, *American Reformers*, 3.

<sup>125</sup> Frank Otto Gatell and John M. McFaul, eds., *Jacksonian America, 1815–1840: New Society, Changing Politics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 2.

<sup>126</sup> Hugins, “Introduction,” 7.

<sup>127</sup> Cole, Jr., *The Social Ideas*, 3.

<sup>128</sup> Young, “Confessional Protest,” 660. “Temperance and antislavery,” Young notes, “were not the first social movements in U.S. history, but they were the first national social movements.” In 1816, before there was a real commitment to the abolition of slavery, the American Colonization Society [The



the end of the 1820s, and expanded even more in the 1830s. Free Will churches such as the Methodists and Baptists, who did not favor organized benevolence, were drawn to campaigns that combated the “special sins of intemperance, slavery, or adultery.”<sup>129</sup>

These social protests and campaigns were broadly interdenominational, reaching people from every social class, and women as well as men were active participants and leaders.<sup>130</sup>

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Society for the Colonization of Free People of Color of America] was founded, which “mixed a specialized foreign mission to evangelize Africa with a nominal commitment to antislavery.” Since some of its founders and leaders were slaveholders who opposed freedom for blacks but favored repatriation as a means to avoid slave rebellions, the Society proposed to return free African-Americans to a “greater freedom” in Africa. Eventually it helped to found the colony of Liberia in Africa, in 1821–1822, and thousands of free black Americans emigrated to West Africa. William Lloyd Garrison, who founded the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833, was probably the first “to herald a new antislavery movement.” In 1831 he launched a newspaper, the *Liberator*, where he argued in favor of “immediate emancipation” and against *gradual* abolition [which he had supported before] and the propositions of the American Colonization Society (667, 674, 677; cf. Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism after 1830* [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976]).

<sup>129</sup> Young, “Confessional Protest,” 682, cf. 661, 672, 675; cf. Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1984), 48–98. An insightful approach on health reform is given in Walters, *American Reformers*, 125–174. The initial benevolent organizations were founded with the hope of uniting religious Protestant groups in the Christian aim of serving humanity and evangelizing. Organized mostly by Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians, they did not gain the favor of all other denominational bodies; the other denominations feared excess control and threats to some doctrinal matters, and gravitated toward independent united-front reform societies that were not sectarian-oriented (Charles I. Foster, *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790–1837* [Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina press, 1960], 132, cf. 121–207; Clifford S. Griffin, *Their Brothers’ Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800–1865* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1960]). Timothy Smith argues that after the Civil War there was a “rapid growth of concern with purely social issues such as poverty, workingmen’s rights, the liquor traffic, slum housing, and racial bitterness ... in some cases supplanted entirely the earlier pre-occupation with salvation from personal sin and the life hereafter, ... [in which] Crusades for the rights of oppressed groups of all sorts absorbed the energies of hundreds of clergymen,” thus leading to the origins of the “social gospel” (Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* [New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1957], 148–149).

<sup>130</sup> For an exposition of women’s involvement in many of the reforms, see Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford, “Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Protestant Social Reform Movements in the United States,” in *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*, ed. Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Ruether, 3 vols. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 3:1021–1025; idem, “Nineteenth-Century Protestant Social Reform Movements in the United States,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 57.3–4 (2003): 77–100. Although these societies fought to better the social condition of America, they did not have the complete support of the population: the abolitionists in particular “confronted spirited and violent counter-mobilizations” (Young, “Confessional Protest,” 667, 669).

## Health and Medicine

The early nineteenth century was a chaotic period concerning public health issues in the United States. Ignorance of what caused illness and harmful “therapies,” including bleeding and purging, were common.<sup>131</sup> The training for medical doctors was very limited, and attention for public health was scarce. Only in the second half of the century did Americans invest in more research resulting in some progress in medical science.<sup>132</sup>

Meanwhile, some reformers, physicians, and writers began lifting up their voices for improving the quality of life. They promulgated health reform through publications, public lectures, health institutions, and health schools. Sylvester Graham (1794–1851), a Presbyterian minister, became one of the pioneers of health reform in the United States and one of the most influent voices of dietary reform. He remarkably emphasized vegetarianism and temperance and started a health reform paper, *The Graham Journal*, in 1835 in Boston. He was noted by his well-known invention, graham whole-wheat crackers, and for helping founding the American Vegetarian Society (AVS) in 1850.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> For a brief overview of the medical condition during the time and the methods to cure diseases see Dores E. Robinson, *The Story of Our Health Message*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1965), 13–23; Also, Mervyn G. Hardinge, *A Physician Explains Ellen White’s Counsel on Drugs, Herbs, and Natural Remedies* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2001), 19–58.

<sup>132</sup> Medical historian Judith W. Leavitt points out that despite strong interest from the American Medical Association in the early nineteenth century, “it was the Civil War that turned the attention of medical colleges to public health” (Judith W. Leavitt, “Public Health and Preventive Medicine,” in *The Education of American Physicians: Historical Essays*, ed. Ronald L. Numbers [Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1980], 251; cf. Ronald L. Numbers and John Harley Warner, “The Maturation of American Medical Science,” in *Sickness and Health in America: Readings in the History of Medicine and Public Health*, ed. Judith Walzer Leavitt and Ronald L. Numbers, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. rev. [Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997], 130–142).

<sup>133</sup> In 1839 he published his classic on health reform, Sylvester Graham, *Lectures on the Science of Human Life*, 2 vols. (Boston, MA: Marsh, Capen, Lyon & Webb, 1839). This work was later republished by the Seventh-day Adventists (Sylvester Graham, *Lectures on the Science of Human Life: Containing Three Lectures—Eighth, the Organs and Their Uses; Thirteenth, Man’s Physical Nature and the Structure of His Teeth; Fourteenth, the Dietetic Character of Man* [Battle Creek, MI: Office of the Health Reformer,

Another important reformer who preached a natural and healthier lifestyle was William Andrus Alcott (1798–1859) who began to publish a journal on healthful dietetics, *The Moral Reformer* in Massachusetts in 1835. He also became the first president of the AVS and produced several works on health.<sup>134</sup> Russell Trall (1812–1877) was another influential American health reformer and physician. He strongly opposed drug therapies and advocated a drugless and natural medicine. In 1851, he published a 960-page *Hydropathic Encyclopedia*, to teach his students techniques of hydrotherapy, and was for several years “the principal contributor” to the *Water Cure Journal*. In 1852 he founded the New York Hygieo-Therapeutic College.<sup>135</sup>

Some of the health issues promoted by these reformers were followed by Sabbatarian Adventists. James and Ellen White had several health problems since their early days, partially because of their poor lifestyle. Years later, as they became better informed on physical health, they became vigorous health reformers and influenced the Sabbatarian Adventists to become strong promoters of natural remedies and treatments, and a healthier lifestyle.<sup>136</sup>

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1872]). For a biography of Sylvester Graham and his work, see William B. Walker, “The Health Reform Movement in the United States, 1830–1870” (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, 1955), 31–62a; also Karen Iacobbo and Michael Iacobbo, *Vegetarian America: A History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 15–70, 81–84. For a history of the beginning of the AVS, see 71–78.

<sup>134</sup> Some of his most known works are, William A. Alcott, *Vegetable Diet: As Sanctioned by Medical Men, and by Experience in All Ages* (Boston, MA: Marsh, Capen & Lyon, 1838); idem, *Including a System of Vegetable Cookery* (New York, NY: Fowlers and Wells, 1849), this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. and enl. ed. of the previous title; idem, *Lectures on Life and Health, or, The Laws and Means of Physical Culture* (Boston, MA: Phillips, Sampson and Co., 1853).

<sup>135</sup> D. Robinson, *The Story of Our Health Message*, 34–37. For a good overview of Dr. Russell’s work, see Walker, “The Health Reform Movement,” 179–192, 203–268.

<sup>136</sup> D. Robinson, *The Story of Our Health Message*.

## Utopianism

The United States saw the rise and decline of several utopian communal societies in the first half of the nineteenth century. Utopianism was a way of expressing the reformist sentiment of the time; it was an effort to escape from America itself and from the problems of American society.<sup>137</sup> People impelled by an idealistic and perfectionist vision sought to actualize it in separate communities. These utopian movements did not have a great number of adherents, but they represented a need for moral reform.<sup>138</sup>

It is estimated that between the Revolution and the Civil War, more than a hundred communitarian societies were built in America. In the 1840s, “the greatest wave of enthusiasm for utopian ventures” took place “in the aftermath of a deep economic crisis following the Panic of 1837.”<sup>139</sup> Most of them appeared and then quickly disappeared, but the ones with a religious origin and orientation usually stayed for a longer time.<sup>140</sup> They believed that sanctification should be sought within a perfect

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<sup>137</sup> Commager, *The Era of Reform*, 37–38.

<sup>138</sup> Sexuality and emotional intimacy was commonly seen by these groups as a fundamental problem of a world in collapse. For a description and analysis of sexuality and utopian movements, such as celibacy among the Shakers, complex marriages within the Oneida community, and polygamy among Mormons, see Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1981); also idem, *Women, Family, and Utopia: Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

<sup>139</sup> Walters, *American Reformers*, 40.

<sup>140</sup> For a comprehensive exposition of communal utopias in America, see Robert P. Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Religious Communities, 1732-2000* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003). For a brief description of several groups, see Jerome L. Clark, *1844*, vol. 2, *Social Movements* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1968).

society. Probably the most important of these utopian groups were the religious sect of the Shakers,<sup>141</sup> the Rappites or Harmonists,<sup>142</sup> and the Oneida Community.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Shakers were followers of Ann Lee (1736–1784). Lee immigrated to the United States from England in the 1770s and founded the United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing, or the Shakers. Their worship involved ecstatic dancing and shaking. After Lee’s death, Joseph Meacham assumed the leadership of the group, drafted their constitution, and elaborated and systematized their doctrine. Under his leadership the Society experienced a surge of growth with the onset of the Second Awakening. By 1825, there were about twenty Shaker communities scattered in New England and other parts of the country, and within a few years, they had about six thousand followers. The basis of their economy was farming. For a well documented history of the Shakers, see Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); see also John McKelvie Whitworth, *God’s Blueprints: A Sociological Study of Three Utopian Sects* (Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 13–88; and Edward D. Andrews, *The People Called Shakers: A Search for the Perfect Society* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1963).

<sup>142</sup> Johann Georg Rapp (1757–1847) was a German Lutheran Pietist who, after being persecuted in Germany, arrived in the United States in 1803. He founded the Harmony Society, which built three American towns: Harmony, PA (c. 1805), New Harmony, IN (c. 1814), and Economy, PA (c. 1825). The Harmony community prospered and survived for more than 100 years. Their piety and economic discipline made them one of the longest-lived religious utopias. The most important points in their doctrinal system were celibacy (although Rapp began a sexual relationship with a young girl in 1826), common religious ownership of property, and the nearness of the end of the world. Rapp predicted that the world would end in 1829 and the failure of his prediction resulted in a schism, but did not disrupt the entire group. In 1825 New Harmony was sold to Robert Owen (1771–1858), a Welsh social reformer, popularly considered “the father of British Socialism” and one of the first to apply cooperative principles to business organization. Owen’s antagonism toward religion transformed the community into a secular experiment, and although it did not prosper, several other secular communities were opened in the United States with the basic tenets of communal utopianism introduced by Owen. For a brief but insightful and well-documented history of the Harmonists, see Sutton, *Communal Utopias*, 37–46; also Karl J. R. Arndt, *George Rapp’s Harmony Society, 1785–1847* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965); Robert P. Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Secular Communities, 1824–2000* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 1–22.

<sup>143</sup> The Oneida Community was founded by John Humphrey Noyes (1811–1886) in 1848 in Oneida, New York. Noyes founded his first community in Putney, Vermont in the early 1840s, but his belief in “complex marriage” angered the local citizens, who forced Noyes to move. The Oneida Community believed that the Second Coming had occurred in A.D. 70, thus making spiritual perfection and freedom from sin possible on this earth. They also practiced communal property and possessions, complex marriage, and male continence. In 1869, they initiated what they called “Stirpiculture,” a scientific plan for procreation (rigorous selection of the parents, trying to perfect the descendants), and in 1879 they abandoned complex marriage. Their neighbors usually saw the community as “a gross indulgence in free love thinly disguised under a mask of religion” (Gaustad, *Faith of the Founders*, 126). In 1881 the community dissolved and was transformed into a joint-stock company—a giant silverware enterprise, Oneida Limited. For an insider view and analysis of the movement see Constance Noyes Robertson, ed., *Oneida Community: An Autobiography, 1851–1876* ([Syracuse, NY]: Syracuse University Press, 1970); also, idem, *Oneida Community: The Breakup, 1876–1881* ([Syracuse, NY]: Syracuse University Press, 1972). For further study see Ira L. Mandelker, *Religion, Society, and Utopia in Nineteenth Century America* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); Whitworth, *God’s Blueprints*, 89–166; Maren Lockwood Carden, *Oneida: Utopian Community to Modern Corporation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, [1969]).

## Men, Women, and Families

The early nineteenth century in America was characterized by gender inequality. American women had limited rights in the legal, social, academic, and political arenas. Industrial development and the westward expansion opened new opportunities to women. By the second quarter of the century, women had gained more access to education and doors were opening to them in fields that had been previously male-dominated. Nonetheless, most middle-class married women put their energy into housework and childrearing, and those unmarried women who worked outside the home earned wages much inferior to those of men.<sup>144</sup>

The 1820s were the beginning of a new era in education for women. The Troy Female Seminary in Troy, New York, founded by Emma Hart Willard (1787–1870) in 1821, and a small school founded by Catharine Beecher (1800–1878), which became the Hartford Female Seminary in 1828, began offering young women a college education comparable to that of young men. These schools soon became models for others of their kind.<sup>145</sup> Rapid population growth created a greater demand for teachers, and the need for

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<sup>144</sup> For an overview of the condition of women and the new opportunities that were accessible to women before the Civil War, see Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, enl. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 3–98.

<sup>145</sup> For a history and influence of Willard's life and seminary not only in America but also in Europe, see Alma Lutz, *Emma Willard: Pioneer Educator of American Women* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1964). For Catharine Beecher's influence, see Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973). Beecher "over the course of her lifetime ... accumulated a tremendous amount of animus against male cultural dominance, but she usually expressed this anger indirectly. Her political assumptions led her to oppose the women's rights movement. Nevertheless her efforts to overcome the marginal status allotted to women constituted a central theme in her career. It caused her to innovate, to seek new channels of cultural influence, and to design an ideology that gave women a central place in national life." Generally, people in the nineteenth century did not see the self-sacrificing work of a wife and mother as a positive good, but Beecher influenced the idea that it was the "female equivalent to self-fulfillment" (xiii–xiv). During the antebellum era there was a prevailing view among upper- and middle-class white women, named by its detractors the "Cult of Domesticity" or "Cult of True Womanhood," which presented as ideal women those who developed piety, purity,

men in industrial and commercial jobs opened the teaching profession to educated women.<sup>146</sup>

The second quarter of the century marked “a turning point in women’s participation, public activities, and social visibility.”<sup>147</sup> In 1848, Seneca Falls, New York, became the birthplace of the women’s rights movement when Elizabeth Cady Stanton (a Seneca Falls resident), Lucretia Mott (a feminist Quaker minister), and about 300 other women and men held the first Women’s Rights Convention there. One hundred of them signed the Declaration of Sentiments, which stated in one of its paragraphs, “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men *and women* are created equal.” Women’s rights activists argued for equality of opportunity for women in all areas of life, but many of their demands were not met until decades later.<sup>148</sup>

Some Christian denominations and the Great Awakening offered new ways for women to develop their talents, and several women evidenced their talents as powerful

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submission, and domesticity. This view contrasted the home and the world, and idealized the home as a haven built by a gracious wife and mother for her husband and children; the greatest value for such a woman was to raise her children to be valuable citizens. For an exposition of what was meant by that in the antebellum era, see Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860,” *American Quarterly* 18.2 (Summer 1966): 151–174; repr. in idem, *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1976), 21–41.

<sup>146</sup> Sklar, *Catharine Beecher*, 97–98. Thomas Woody, *A History of Women’s Education in the United States*, 2 vols. (New York, NY: Science Press, 1929), 1:460–500.

<sup>147</sup> Nancy F. Cott, *The Bond of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 6. For an analysis of ideas about woman and the involvement of women in the work of reform in America before the Civil War, see Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women in Antebellum Reform* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2000); also idem, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); also Gifford, *Encyclopedia of Women*, 3:1021–1025.

<sup>148</sup> Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History* (New York, NY: Meredith, 1963), 315–317. For a well-documented history of the facts that led to this movement, see Judith Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman’s Rights Convention* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004). In 1920, the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was ratified, granting women the right to vote.

lecturers. Charles Finney's revivals played an important sociological role for women: the fact that he encouraged women to testify and pray in public also encouraged them "to fill new roles as pastors, preachers, evangelists, exhorters, and lecturers."<sup>149</sup> The Methodists were probably the tradition most open to female public activities. In their meetings women were not only welcomed but also encouraged to publically shout praise, give personal testimony, exhort, and pray. Some women even became eloquent preachers. The Christian Connexion also valued and encouraged the public participation of women in their meetings. The Millerite movement was another one open toward women's participation.<sup>150</sup> Their background in these traditions prepared James and Ellen White to embark later on in a team-ministry where they both had active public participation and leadership in their religious meetings and community.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Protestant families in New England tended to emphasize the importance of strict obedience to develop good habits and form character. In this spectrum a special role was put on mothers who probably had the major influence on the formation of the character of children, since they spent more

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<sup>149</sup> Hardesty, "Your Daughters Shall Prophesy," 160–161.

<sup>150</sup> For an examination of the lives and ministries of more than one hundred female preachers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740–1844* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). Since the early years of the century the Christian Connexion had a strong tradition of female preachers (Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 78–79). A couple of women also had opportunity to become preachers among the Millerite movement, though they faced some prejudice and objections (Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 119–121; Knight, *William Miller*, 100–102). Catherine Brekus lists twenty three women who were preachers and/or exhorters in the Millerite movement (*Strangers & Pilgrims*, 343–346). For an insightful overview on the role and opportunities for women within Methodism, see Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 151–172.



time with them in their early years.<sup>151</sup> Both James and Ellen White were privileged in being raised in this context. They were reared by hard-working fathers and devoted Christian mothers who actively guided their children in the development of a right character.<sup>152</sup> This kind of environment definitely prepared them for early maturity, early religious commitment, an early marriage and child-rearing, and great responsibilities.

### Conclusion

The first half of the nineteenth century was an era of remarkable optimism, progress, and change in the United States. People experimented with revolutionary and innovative ideas that resulted in dramatic changes. The goals proposed by the new leaders of an independent land established upon democratic-republican ideals influenced the nation in the religious, social, and political realms. A sense of freedom and self-determination inspired people to work for the improvement of the nation, and the religious milieu of the time was hospitable to many reform movements.

The Second Great Awakening steered the U.S. toward a more democratic approach to religious life through the “New Theology,” which called attention to human responsibility; the voluntarism developed by Lyman Beecher, which emphasized Christian responsibility for the betterment of society; and the revivalism of Finney, which focused on real conversion experiences. It reflected the democratic and revolutionary

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<sup>151</sup> For a selection of writings on the attitudes of American Protestants toward child-rearing in America, see Philip J. Greven, Jr., *Child-Rearing Concepts, 1628–1861: Historical Sources* (Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock, 1973).

<sup>152</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 11; Ellen G. White, “Communications,” *YI*, December 1852, 20-21; “Interview with Dr. and Mrs. A. J. Sanderson,” Elmshaven, Ms 82, August 25, 1901, 5; quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:21.

spirit of the nation and opened the doors to innovation, especially in the theological camp.

The theological concept that all who earnestly repented of their sins and reformed their lives could be saved led many Americans to believe that it was their duty to improve society, not only in their own land but also in the rest of the world. The idealistic belief that society could be bettered by human ability motivated Americans to work hard for its enhancement. Missionary societies were founded to spread the practical gospel and keep America Christian. This reform was generally based on a millennial faith that a golden age would be inaugurated by Christ's Second Coming or established through the preaching and practice of the gospel. Several new denominations and utopian societies, therefore, developed in the prevalent restless ferment.

Women's place in society also changed during this innovative and revolutionary century. Though the reform in this area progressed in small steps, by the middle of the century, women enjoyed some advancement and had the opportunity to be part of the intellectual and social transformation taking place. Religion played an important part in the opening of doors for women.

The environment of the early nineteenth century in the United States played a great role in the lives of James White and Ellen Harmon. The Christian education they received was fundamental in the formation of their characters. The religious restless ferment of the times that led many to restudy prophecies and expect a new world also led James and Ellen to embrace the pre-millennial doctrine of the soon coming of Jesus. The imminence of the message led them to an active, though limited, participation in preaching and exhortation. The freedom for thinking, entrepreneurship, and progress of

the epoch were important factors that facilitated James and Ellen in organizing a religious movement that would soon spread throughout the world.

## CHAPTER 3

### FROM THEIR EARLY YEARS TO THE GREAT

### DISAPPOINTMENT (1821–1844)

#### Introduction

James White and Ellen Harmon [White] were both born in a time of transition and transformation in the United States. They were born and raised in the northeastern United States. James was born in Palmyra, a small city in central Maine, while Ellen was born in Gorham, a small town located in the south of Maine west of Portland. Ellen spent her childhood and youth in Maine’s largest city, Portland, located on the state’s southern coastline.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to present a brief biographical sketch of the early years of James and Ellen, up to the Great Disappointment of October 1844. Since, “the quality of relationships most often determines the quality of a person’s life,”<sup>2</sup> it is important to know the childhood and family that James and Ellen lived in, in order to understand the personality and traits of character they later brought into their married life. Though this research does not deal with biological factors, which are beyond the scope of this study, it is essential to know the background of James and Ellen to have a more

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<sup>1</sup> Portland was a “rapidly growing city,” that had a population of 12,601 in 1830, and 15,218 in 1840, what placed her “among important cities of medium size” in nineteenth century America (Frederick Hoyt, “Ellen White’s Hometown: Portland Maine, 1827–1846,” in *The World of Ellen G. White*, ed. Gary Land [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1987], 14–15). Hoyt gives an insightful synthesis of the history of Portland during 1827-1846 (pp. 13–31); cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:18.

<sup>2</sup> Roberta M. Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships: A New Way of Thinking about Human Interactions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Stephens City, VA: Leading Systems Press, 2017), 3.

complete understanding of how they were raised and the type of family they lived with, which definitely affected their behavior for the future and helped to mold their personalities.

James White

Early Days

James White eventually became one of the most prominent figures in Seventh-day Adventism, and published several autobiographical works, always linking his life closely with the Adventist experience.<sup>3</sup> Born on August 4, 1821, in Palmyra, Maine, James White proudly traced his lineage to the first baby born aboard the *Mayflower*.<sup>4</sup> James's parents were very religious. His father, John White (1785–1871), was a searcher for truth. At the age of twenty-one, he became a Congregationalist. Unsatisfied with his acceptance into the church through baptism by sprinkling, he felt more comfortable when he was accepted into the Baptist Church by immersion.<sup>5</sup> He became an active Baptist, served as a deacon, and according to James, established the first Sunday school in the state of Maine in 1828.<sup>6</sup> He then joined the Christian Connexion, an association of churches in the Restorationist tradition, which was “more liberal and scriptural” than the Calvinistic

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<sup>3</sup> The main source in this biographical sketch of James White is his autobiographical work, *Life Incidents*. Though it was slightly revised and updated in the later autobiographies, it is the most complete, containing information and details not found in others.

<sup>4</sup> Wheeler argues that recent research questions this theory, but James White referred to it with conviction (*James White*, 18; see also James White, *Life Incidents*, 9–10; James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* [1880, 1888], 9–10; [James White], “The Venerable Dead,” *RH*, July 18, 1871, 36; cf. “Elder James White,” *New York Times*, August 9, 1881, 5).

<sup>5</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 10.

<sup>6</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “Sabbath-Schools,” *RH*, August 22, 1878, 68; cited in Wheeler, *James White*, 21.

Baptists. He served the church as a “deacon nearly forty years.”<sup>7</sup> In 1842, John accepted Miller’s teaching of the soon second coming of Jesus, and in 1860, he embraced the Sabbath teaching.<sup>8</sup>

James’s mother, Betsey White (1788–1871), was a granddaughter of Dr. Samuel Shepard, an eminent Baptist minister in New England. She was a devoted Christian. James describes her as a woman of “good mind, . . . amiable disposition, . . . with a meek and quiet spirit, devotion to the cause of Christ, and a consistent walk and godly conversation.”<sup>9</sup>

Born into a family of nine children, James was the middle one, but he outlived his four younger siblings. The religious fervor of James’s parents deeply affected their children, and three of them dedicated their lives to Christian ministry. Two of James’s older brothers became ministers, one Methodist and the other Baptist; James began his ministry in the Christian Connexion church and later became a Seventh-day Adventist minister.

James’s childhood was marked by health difficulties. Besides being considered a feeble child, James was diagnosed with worm fever when he was less than three years old. The fever affected his eyes and nearly destroyed his sight, leaving him a cross-eyed, feeble, and partially blind boy. These physical disadvantages prevented him from becoming a scholar, at least for a while, and led him to farming. Years of hard labor,

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<sup>7</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 10–11.

<sup>8</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 11. James describes the religious experiencing of his father as “marked with firmness and zeal, and yet with freedom from that bigotry which prevents investigation and advancement” (p. 10).

<sup>9</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 11; James White, “My Mother,” *RH*, January 24, 1871, 45.

however, strengthened his general health, and by the time he was sixteen his eyes had improved greatly. For the first time, he could read with freedom.<sup>10</sup>

During those days of hard work, James gave his life to Jesus. As a child, he had attended Sunday school regularly and assiduously committed to memory large parts of Scripture.<sup>11</sup> When he was thirteen years old, he experienced a conversion in a “sweet morning” at the grove. Feeling “pressed with the weight” of his sins, and recognizing his condition as a sinner, helpless and miserable, he went weeping to Jesus and cried for forgiveness and acceptance. “Peace gradually flowed in my heart,” he stated.<sup>12</sup> At the age of fifteen, James was united with the Christian Connexion church by baptism.<sup>13</sup>

### Back to School

When James was nineteen, he returned to school, but he did not receive much encouragement from his fellows. His age and the long absence from school made him incapable of working simple mathematical problems or telling the difference between a verb, adverb, and adjective, and he was deficient in other common branches. He was advised to abandon education and instead turn to farming. Being a determined and persevering man, he did not follow that counsel. After twelve weeks of hard study, eighteen hours a day, he received a certificate that qualified him to teach the common

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<sup>10</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 12.

<sup>11</sup> James White, “Sabbath-Schools,” *RH*, August 22, 1878, 68.

<sup>12</sup> James White, “That Sweet Morning,” *YI*, February 1854, 13.

<sup>13</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 15.

branches (reading, writing, arithmetic). James began teaching the next winter.<sup>14</sup> This very busy schedule and “imprudence” in order to compensate for the lost years affected his health and made him a dyspeptic.<sup>15</sup>

This victory reawakened in James the desire for living. He changed his perception of being “nearly worthless in the world” to the hope of having “powers to become a man.” At the close of his first year of teaching, he returned to the St. Albans Academy for five weeks to advance his education. At the close of the school term, he was again prostrated by another infirmity. Working as “a raw hand in a saw mill,” he cut his ankle, “which resulted in permanent weakness and occasional painful lameness” in his left foot. From then on, he was unable to bear his weight upon his left heel.<sup>16</sup>

An avid student with a thirst for learning, he joined another school to learn natural philosophy, Algebra, and Latin. “At the close of that term,” he wrote, “I had conquered all the Arithmetics within my reach, was regarded as a good grammarian, was prepared to teach penmanship, and was told by my preceptor that I could fit college in one year.” This encouragement definitely moved James.<sup>17</sup>

Physical impairments were not the only price James paid to sustain his goal of becoming a scholar. His spiritual life also suffered a detrimental turn. James had been raised in a Christian environment, but five years after his baptism, he was suffocated with the desire for learning at all costs. He worked so hard to make up for the lost years

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<sup>14</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 12–13.

<sup>15</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 127.

<sup>16</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 13.

<sup>17</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 14.



that he skipped his spiritual exercises. In order to forget the depressive years when his hopes and dreams seemed futile, he opted to invest all his time, money, and energy in pursuing material advantages. The “return of health and opportunity” absorbed him “in worldly ambitions.”<sup>18</sup> He did not become a depraved or profane man, but recognized that he loved this world more than he had loved Christ, and “was worshiping education instead of the God of Heaven,” having neither time nor taste for the study of the Bible.<sup>19</sup>

### Back to Christ

The second break in James’s school career was motivated by religious conviction. At the end of his second year of teaching, he returned home and found that the Second Coming message preached by the Millerites had impressed his mother. Millerism for James was synonymous with fanaticism, but out of respect for his devout and pious mother, he went to the meetings being held in his city. The meeting greatly impressed James, who felt called to preach to his students. He tried to squelch the call, but felt “a sweet peace from God” when he decided to obey it and share the good news with his friends. He then began visiting his students and their families, sharing his testimony, and praying with them.<sup>20</sup>

The initial public effort to teach the Millerite doctrine of the Second Coming was marked with instances of both disappointment and success. James also still struggled with

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<sup>18</sup> William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White,” 9.

<sup>19</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 15, 17.

<sup>20</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 19, cf. 18–23.

a desire to be successful in the secular world.<sup>21</sup> He spent that summer in a struggle “between a longing to continue his education and the conviction that he should herald the coming of Christ.”<sup>22</sup> After pondering and analyzing the matter and feeling called to a full-time dedication to ministry, he decided to leave his teaching occupation and dedicate himself entirely to preaching the soon return of Jesus. Listening to Joshua Himes, Apollos Hale, and William Miller made him more enthusiastic about learning and preaching the Second Coming.<sup>23</sup> Miller’s clear arguments, powerful exhortations, and appeals conquered James. He then began working enthusiastically for the cause and initiated his full-time ministry with a horse borrowed from his father, a saddle, and “several pieces of an old bridle” that were given to him.<sup>24</sup>

#### Millerite Minister

James initiated his ministry around Palmyra and later expanded to more distant towns. His initial efforts did not bring “special results,” but with perseverance he was strengthened. Two specific experiences marked his life: the first time he really felt a burden to save people, and a *heavenly* protection that saved him from an angry mob. Once, when he finished lecturing, sixty people arose for prayers. After seeing the condition of those people, he felt the “burden of the work” and a “love for precious

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<sup>21</sup> Wheeler, *James White*, 25.

<sup>22</sup> William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White,” 9.

<sup>23</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 25, 72.

<sup>24</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 26, 73.

souls” as never before. Unprepared to lead those souls farther, he called his older brother, who was a preacher and, after six weeks, baptized several and organized a large church.<sup>25</sup>

The other episode that made a profound impression on James occurred in January 1843. Preaching in Augusta, Maine, he was provoked by an influential Universalist in the city.<sup>26</sup> The next night, an angry mob surrounded the meeting place. Confronted by the mob, James called upon those in the house to pray. The mob threw snowballs at him while he prayed, wetting his clothing and Bible. This only made his preaching more powerful. He made an appeal, and nearly one hundred responded to it. When he left the room, he recalled, “one locked arms with me to assist and guard me. His countenance seemed impressively familiar, yet I did not know him. . . . When I passed the crowd I missed him . . . Was it an angel of God . . .? Who can say it was not?”<sup>27</sup>

James eventually became a minor leader in the Millerite movement in eastern Maine, a “Second-Advent lecturer,” and a successful preacher. He pioneered the work in new areas.<sup>28</sup> He taught the biblical prophecies in several places and saw a great interest and deep conviction among hearers and many conversions.<sup>29</sup> In the four months of his first preaching itinerary (the winter of 1842/43), more than a thousand people embraced

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<sup>25</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 73–74.

<sup>26</sup> The Universalists were the greatest opposers of James’s preaching. Their teachings said that Jesus had come the second time during the destruction of Jerusalem and that eventually God would save all people, and thus there was no need to preach about preparing for the Second Coming (James White, *Life Incidents*, 81, cf. 99–102).

<sup>27</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 79, cf. 75–79.

<sup>28</sup> Wheeler, *James White*, 25; James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 106.

<sup>29</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 74–108.

the message of the imminent coming of Jesus.<sup>30</sup> Despite the severe weather, and the scarcity of needed things and money, James was happy with his mission. The Christian denomination of which James was a member ordained him as a minister in 1843, and he continued faithfully preaching and baptizing the converted.<sup>31</sup>

In the summer of 1843, James visited Portland, Maine. It was probably during this visit that he saw Ellen Harmon for the first time.<sup>32</sup> James described her as “very timid,” but “a decided Adventist” with a rich experience and powerful testimony that led ministers to seek “her labors as an exhorter in their several congregations.” He could not imagine that about three years later, she would become his “crown of rejoicing.”<sup>33</sup>

### The Disappointments

The time period the Millerites had established for the Second Coming was between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. When the time limit passed, they had to face the bitter reality that it had not happened. This disappointment was soon relieved when they discovered in the prophecy of Hab 2:1–4 (cf. Ezek 12:21–28; Matt 25) that a tarrying time had been prophesied. James, therefore, continued his preaching ministry

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<sup>30</sup> V. Robinson, *James White*, 26; Wheeler, *James White*, 27.

<sup>31</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 96, 104.

<sup>32</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 104; James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 79; cf. Wheeler, *James White*, 37; V. Robinson, *James White*, 28; William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: II. The Young Woman Who Was Homesick,” *RH*, March 7, 1935, 5. If 1843 is correct, James then mistakenly assumed that Ellen was sixteen, but she turned sixteen only in the late autumn of 1843.

<sup>33</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 126.

with the same fervor, and in June 1844, had his “first experience in meeting and rebuking fanaticism.”<sup>34</sup>

August 1844 was a turning point in the Millerite movement. The Seventh Month message was introduced at the Exeter camp-meeting, in New Hampshire. Samuel S. Snow explained convincingly that Jesus would come on the Yom Kippur day, the tenth day of the seventh month, according to the Jewish calendar. This date, according to the reckoning of the Jewish Karaites, would be October 22.<sup>35</sup> A new enthusiasm took hold of the Millerites present there, including James. Invigorated with the new light, James went back to the field with much more confidence and enthusiasm to preach the last warning.

The date expected came and passed again, and Jesus did not return. This became known as the Great Disappointment. At the reality of another coming cold winter, James “wept like a child.”<sup>36</sup> The Millerites then diverged into different groups. As Knight points out, “Bewilderment and disorientation characterized both Millerite leaders and followers between October 22, 1844, and the end of that year.”<sup>37</sup> One group of Adventists held that Jesus had come on October 22; thus, by a nonliteral interpretation of the Bible they developed an unbiblical theory spiritualizing the coming of Jesus by asserting that He had come—spiritually—to individual human hearts. Another group led by Joshua Himes and several of the main Millerite leaders, reacted against this radical group and convened

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<sup>34</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 117, cf. 115–117. This incident was a preview of several fanaticisms he had to combat in later years.

<sup>35</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 153–168.

<sup>36</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 182.

<sup>37</sup> Knight, *William Miller*, 190; Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 224.

a few conferences beginning with the one in Albany, New York, in April-May 1845.<sup>38</sup>

This group gave up faith in the date of October 1844, and began looking for new dates for the fulfillment of the prophecy culminating with the Second Coming of Jesus. A third group, however, as they could not adhere to the unscriptural teaching of a spiritual second coming, nor the idea of setting further dates for the return of Jesus, continued studying the Bible and found answers for their questions regarding the prophecy of Daniel 8:14.<sup>39</sup>

James was part of this third group. Though prostrated by distress and disillusionment, he did not abandon his faith, but immersed himself in study to find biblical comfort and answers. According to Dan 8:14, the event to mark the close of the 2300 days was the “cleansing of the sanctuary.” The Millerites thought the earth was the sanctuary to be cleansed by fire at the second coming of Christ. When this expectation ended in disappointment, some Millerites discovered that Scripture teaches the existence of a sanctuary in heaven, which was to be cleansed by the high priestly ministry of Christ (Heb 9:22–23). They concluded that October 22, 1844 still had prophetic significance. Instead of being the time for Jesus’s coming, it marked the beginning of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>40</sup> James, after intense Bible study, expressed his faith in the beliefs of this group, who later became known as Seventh-day Adventists.

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<sup>38</sup> “Mutual Conference of Adventists at Albany,” *Advent Herald*, May 14, 1845, 105-108; “Conference of Adventists at Albany, New York,” *Advent Herald*, May 21, 1845, 116-118; *Proceedings of the Mutual Conference of Adventists, Held in the City of Albany, the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of April, and the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, 1845* (New York: Joshua V. Himes, 1845).

<sup>39</sup> For a good overview of the Millerite fallout into different groups, see Knight, *William Miller*, 209-276; Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 245-325; Merlin D. Burt, *CHIS 674: Development of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Berrien Springs, MI: Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, 2013), 55-105; Burt, “Historical Background,” 60-265.

<sup>40</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 182–209; Knight, *William Miller*, 258–262.

## Summary

James was born in a time of transition, and his life was a dynamic one. Several physical infirmities marked his younger days, but he survived through perseverance and hard work. His dream of becoming a scholar was first shattered by physical impairment, but his determination led him to school again as soon as he was able. His expectation of secular prosperity was then crushed also by spiritual convictions. The confidence that Jesus was coming in his days and the calling to be part of the team of ministers spreading this urgent message transformed him from a secular man to a spiritual leader. Born of a father who followed whatever he found to be true and changed his denominational affiliation several times, James followed the pattern and lived in the confidence that his beliefs were biblically supported. He accepted the Millerite teaching of the soon coming of Jesus, dedicated his life to it, and faced the severe disappointment of not seeing his expectations fulfilled.

## Ellen Gould Harmon

### Childhood

Ellen White authored several sketches of her life.<sup>41</sup> She was born Ellen Gould Harmon in a farmhouse in Gorham, Maine, on November 26, 1827.<sup>42</sup> She and her

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<sup>41</sup> The main source for this biographical sketch is the unpublished document *Life Sketches Manuscript* (1915), since it reflects a rich collection of material and is the most detailed. See <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/666.2>, accessed June 20, 2022.

<sup>42</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 3. James Nix points out that “there is some ambiguity” about the specific date of Ellen’s birth. November 26, 1827, nevertheless, was the one Ellen always gave in her autobiographies. For a sample of other probable dates, see James R. Nix, “Ellen White’s Racial Background,” in *Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium 1* (Berrien Springs, MI: Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, 2005), 31.

fraternal twin sister, Elizabeth (“Lizzie”) were the youngest children of Robert F. Harmon, Sr. (1786–1866), a farmer and hat-maker, and Eunice Gould Harmon (1787–1863), housewife and homemaker, who already had four daughters and two sons.<sup>43</sup> Ellen’s parents were devoted and active members of the Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>44</sup> Their prominence in the church’s work and active involvement in laboring for the conversion of others led seven of their eight children to be baptized in the Methodist Church.<sup>45</sup> The Harmon children were raised in a devoted Christian environment and were

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<sup>43</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:18. According to some researchers, both Ellen’s parents sprang from Anglo-Saxon lines that can be traced back through early American history to England (Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:18, 487). Ellen’s features, however, led some to suggest a possible Black or Indian ancestry. Charles E. Dudley has argued that “there is evidence to suggest that there are members of the colored race” in Ellen’s ancestry (Charles E. Dudley, Sr., “*Thou Who Hath Brought Us*”: *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination Among African-Americans* [Brushton, NJ: Teach Services, 1997], 66; cf. 70). Later, Dudley elaborated on his research and claimed Ellen White was “another great African-American woman” who descended from or was related to some mulatto Gould brothers who “came from the Dutch West Indies and settled near Salem, New Jersey,” by the mid-1680s (Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., *The Genealogy of Ellen Gould Harmon White: The Prophetess of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Story of the Growth and Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination as It Relates to African-Americans* [Nashville, TN: Dudley Publishing Services, 1999], 13, 21, 41–42). A research study done in 1920 determined that Ellen’s lineage on her father’s side was of Anglo-Saxon origin (Artemas C. Harmon, comp. and ed., *The Harmon Genealogy, Comprising All Branches in New England* [Washington, DC: Gibson Bros., 1920], 41, 79–80). The Ellen G. White Estate has more recently contracted professional genealogists to specifically trace Ellen’s lineage on her mother’s side. The documented evidence they provided (1983, 2002) indicated that her ancestors came directly from England to New England in 1635; therefore, “based upon two professional genealogical studies” plus Harmon’s genealogical book, the White Estate supports the conclusion of Ellen’s Anglo-Saxon origin (“What is Known Regarding Ellen White’s Genealogy?” [Ellen G. White Estate, <http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/faq-egw.html>]; “Ancestral Chart of Ellen G. [Harmon] White” [Ellen G. White Estate, 1983, <http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/ancestralchart.html>]; and Roger D. Joslyn, “Gould Ancestry of Ellen Gould [Harmon] White,” [Ellen G. White Estate, 2002, with some pages updated in 2003, <http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/genealogy.html>]; cf. Nix, “Ellen White’s Racial Background.” For further details on the extensive research done by the Ellen G. White Estate on Ellen White’s ancestry, see Craig H. Newborn, “Ancestry of Ellen Gould (Harmon) White,” *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 597–602; also Benjamin J. Baker, “‘I Do Not Mean To Live A Coward or Die A Coward’: An Examination of Ellen G. White’s Lifelong Relationship to Black People” (PhD diss., Howard University, 2011), 8–10.

<sup>44</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 3, cf. 57. Her parents later accept the Sabbath and became seventh-day Adventists and were faithful and active Christians till their death (Ellen G. White, “They Sleep In Jesus,” *RH*, April 21, 1868, 297).

<sup>45</sup> Ellen was baptized in 1842. Though Ellen says that her parents “had the joy of seeing their children, eight in number, all converted and gathered into the fold of Christ” (Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 3), evidence shows that the family was expelled from the Methodist Church in September



prepared for an industrious life of discipline, with “times now and then for amusement,” but no place for idleness or disobedience “that was not taken in hand at once.”<sup>46</sup> While she was still a child, Ellen’s parents moved to Portland.

### First Spiritual Distress

Ellen had a very intense spiritual life, marked with highs and lows, full of peaceful as well as distressing moments. Probably the first experience that troubled and spiritually distressed young Ellen occurred in 1836, when she was confronted with the possible reality of the imminent coming of Jesus. A short paragraph from a “waste scrap of paper” asserting “the earth would be consumed in about thirty years from that time,” troubled her. This teaching went against what she had been taught about a temporal millennium before the glorious event. Thirty years seemed to be a very short time for the conversion of the world, which would include her. The thought of the impending event deprived her of several nights of sleeping and led her to pray constantly to be ready.<sup>47</sup>

### Accident

Soon after that, Ellen suffered an accident that affected her whole life. While Ellen was “crossing a common,” an “angry” girl threw a stone that hit her, breaking her nose and knocking her out. She woke up covered with blood, very weak, and incapable of

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1843 just before Elizabeth’s scheduled baptism in the Methodist Church. Lizzie apparently never joined any church. On Elizabeth’s spiritual experience see Merlin Burt, “Ellen G. Harmon’s Three Step Conversion between 1836 and 1843 and the Harmon Family Methodist Experience” (unpublished paper, CAR-AU, 1998), 31–32.

<sup>46</sup> “Interview with Dr. and Mrs. A. J. Sanderson,” Elmshaven, Ms 82, August 25, 1901, 5; quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:21.

<sup>47</sup> She comments about it in the context of Miller’s visit to Portland in 1840 and says, “Four years previous to this” (Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 13–14).

walking; her companions carried her home. Ellen was about nine years old. The next weeks were devastating for her. During some weeks she recollected nothing, therefore having no idea of the cause of her illness. Her strength was consumed by the severity of the shock, loss of blood, improper breathing, and lack of physical activity, which reduced her to “almost a skeleton,” and shattered her dream of long life.<sup>48</sup>

The turmoil intensified the reality of death and eternal destiny. Neighbors began talking with her mother about dying and purchasing a burial robe. “I was shocked,” says Ellen, “at the change of my appearance” where “every feature of my face seemed changed.” The reality was more than she could bear. Her misfortune “was insupportable,” taking away the pleasure of living. On the other hand, she feared death and felt unprepared for eternity. “I did not wish to live,” Ellen penned, “and I dared not to die, for I was not prepared.” In her despair, she started praying for the forgiveness of sin and preparation for eternal life, which brought her “peace of mind.”<sup>49</sup>

The first encounter with her father after the accident, made her feel further devastated. Ellen’s father had been absent during the first phase of her misfortune. The depression of 1837 that struck America led him to do business in Georgia with the “hope of a more ready sale.”<sup>50</sup> When he came back home and could not recognize his youngest daughter, it “cut” her “to the heart.” Her “unusually sensitive” feelings and the adversity she lived made her life “often miserable” and unhappy.<sup>51</sup> She was “forced to learn the

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<sup>48</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 5.

<sup>49</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 6.

<sup>50</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:26.

<sup>51</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 7; idem, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:10.

bitter lesson” that personal appearance made a major “difference in the feelings of many” and the treatment people receive from their companions. Her pride had been “wounded,” and she felt a heavy burden in her heart. The sympathy and pity from others lessened the weight of misery and comforted her for a while. The “pleasures of earth” became unattractive, and she “began to turn” to Jesus, where she “found comfort” and assurance of being loved, and “received consolation.”<sup>52</sup>

### First Disappointment Concerning the Second Coming of Jesus

At this time, Ellen suffered her first disappointment relating to the return of Jesus.

She wrote,

I well remember one night in winter<sup>53</sup> when the snow was upon the ground, the heavens were lighted up, the sky looked red and angry, and seemed to open and shut. The snow looked like blood. The neighbors were much frightened. Mother took me out of bed in her arms, and carried me to the window. I was happy. I thought Jesus was coming, and I longed to see him. My heart was full. I clapped my hands for joy, and thought my sufferings were ended. But I was disappointed. The next morning the sun arose as usual, and the singular appearance of the heavens had disappeared.<sup>54</sup>

### Education

The accident ruined Ellen’s dream of a formal education. Before her nose was broken, she “had a clear and resonant voice and enjoyed reading.” She was commonly

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<sup>52</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 6–7.

<sup>53</sup> Probably January 25, 1837, when “there was a most magnificent display of the aurora borealis” seen in the Northeast of the United States and other parts of the country (see Loughborough, *Rise and Progress*, 35; cited in Burt, “Ellen G. Harmon’s Three Step Conversion,” 10). The display like “heavens being on fire” frightened even children, led some to inquire, “if it were the coming of the Judgment” (*New York Commercial Advertiser*, October 22, 1839; quoted in Loughborough, *Rise and Progress*, 35).

<sup>54</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 6.

asked to read aloud to the class because of her voice and reading ability.<sup>55</sup> She was known as a child who “displayed a love of study, a quick perception, and a retentive memory.”<sup>56</sup> The accident changed it all. Weeks of unconsciousness had made Ellen “disfigured, ill, and debilitated.” For the next two years, she was unable to breathe through her nose. It affected her capacity to write and read. She attended school infrequently during that time, was “unable to hold her hand sufficiently steady to write,” and became dizzy when she attempted to read.<sup>57</sup> The girl who injured her assisted her. She was “sincerely sorry, . . . tender and patient” with Ellen, but the effort was unsuccessful. Leaving school was one of the most painful realities to Ellen. “It was the hardest struggle of my young life,” she stated, “to yield to my feebleness, and decide that I must give up my studies and relinquish the cherished hope of acquiring an education.”<sup>58</sup> At the age of twelve, she tried once more to obtain a formal education, entering a female seminary in Portland, but it did not work out. Her health failed and she was forced to decide between school education and her life.<sup>59</sup>

Ellen’s pondering over disappointed hopes and the thought of being an “invalid for life” led her to a spiritual conflict where she began murmuring “against the providence of God” in afflicting her. Her tendency to keep her problems and despair to

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<sup>55</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 8–9.

<sup>56</sup> [Editors], “Introduction,” in Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 2.

<sup>57</sup> Burt, “Ellen G. Harmon’s Three Step Conversion,” 11–12; Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 8.

<sup>58</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 135.

<sup>59</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:14. The main reason Ellen dropped school was health limitations, but another factor that pushed Ellen to quit the seminary was her conviction about the soon coming of Jesus and the mundane influence of the schools of her day where it was “almost impossible to enjoy religion” in a place “surrounded with so many influences calculated to lead the mind from God” (Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:14; Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* [1915], 26).

herself, fearing being misunderstood, instead of sharing and looking for encouragement with family and friends, darkened her spiritual perception. Pride and shyness clouded her mind. “Heaven seemed to be closed against me,” she wrote, and the assurance of God’s love was gone.<sup>60</sup>

## Conversion<sup>61</sup>

### Miller’s Visit to Portland

William Miller visited Portland, Maine, in 1840 and presented his lectures on the second coming of Jesus. By that time, Millerism was spreading beyond the small towns and rural communities of New England into the large cities. People in Portland were receptive to Miller’s lectures. In no other place, according to Miller, had his “master’s message been better received than in Portland.”<sup>62</sup> The results were positive, and about two hundred were converted.<sup>63</sup> Among those in the receptive crowd was the young Ellen Harmon. The proofs presented by Miller convinced many of the exactness of the prophetic periods. The message was right to the point: Jesus would be coming by 1843. Awakenings happened among people from several denominations, who joined in special prayer meetings as a preparation for the soon coming of Jesus.

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<sup>60</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 11. She wrote, “I seemed to be cut off from all chance of earthly happiness, and doomed to continual disappointment and mortification. Even the tender sympathy of my friends pained me, for my pride rebelled against being in a condition to excite their pity” (Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 11–12).

<sup>61</sup> The most comprehensive analysis of Ellen’s conversion is probably Burt, “Ellen G. Harmon’s Three Step Conversion;” for a condensed version see, idem, “‘My Burden Left Me’: The Conversion of Ellen G. White,” *AR*, October 31, 2001, 8–12. Burt divides her conversion process in three periods which stretched from 1836 to 1843: [1] death-bed conversion; [2] finding justification and forgiveness in 1841; and [3] understanding sanctification and the love of God through elder Levi Stockman.

<sup>62</sup> [William Miller], “Miller’s Letters, No. 6,” *ST* [Millerite], June 1, 1840, 37.

<sup>63</sup> L. D. Fleming to William Miller, April 11, 1840; quoted in Nichol, *Midnight Cry*, 81–82; and Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:35.

Ellen responded to the call, but a lack of confidence filled her. She struggled with the idea that she was unworthy of being called a child of God. She kept that feeling to herself and wandered “in darkness and despair.” The situation got worse, and Ellen shared her feelings with her brother, Robert. His sympathy encouraged her to confide in him. In her despair, she spent long hours in prayer and tears during the next months.<sup>64</sup>

#### Methodist Camp Meeting in 1841

The following summer made a special impression on the young Ellen.<sup>65</sup> During a Methodist camp meeting, a sermon on the experience of Esther brought Ellen the encouragement she needed. The pastor argued eloquently that those in “doubt and bondage by timidity and fear of failure” should only trust and “put forth the hand of faith and touch the scepter” of God’s grace.<sup>66</sup> The message was right to the point in Ellen’s experience, and the assurance of pardon and peace in surrendering to Jesus touched her heart. The words comforted her and clarified the darkness of her soul. One thing however still disturbed Ellen; she could not “experience the spiritual ecstasy” she considered to be the evidence of God’s acceptance. Bowing at the altar, Ellen cried out for mercy and stayed kneeling in prayer till her “burden left” and her “heart was light.” She felt confident that God sympathized with her distressing experience. “I learned,” she

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<sup>64</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 14–16.

<sup>65</sup> Ellen was taken into the Methodist church on probation in September 1841. Since this happened before her probation, evidence points to the summer of 1841 (see Burt, “Ellen G. Harmon’s Three Step Conversion,” 18).

<sup>66</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 17.

confided, “more of the divine character of Christ in that short period when bowed among the praying ones than ever before.”<sup>67</sup>

### Baptism in 1842

The experience of assurance enlightened Ellen’s life. She began to see her early afflictions, such as the accident, as happening “in mercy for [her] good,” to turn her heart “away from the world and its unsatisfying pleasures, and incline it toward the enduring attractions of heaven.” Soon she was taken into the church on probation, and accepted for baptism. Ellen asked to be baptized by immersion, for she understood it to be the only “mode of baptism authorized by the Scriptures.” The experience of baptism made a great impression on Ellen’s heart. She felt as if it had raised her to “a newness of life.” The same day, she was accepted into the Methodist church in full membership.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 18, 21. Camp meetings became a popular tool for evangelism and a place of many conversions. For a comprehensive history of the camp meetings in America dating from 1786, see Brown, *Holy Ground*; also, Ellen Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion: The Social Origins of Camp Meeting Revivalism* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1999). For a selection of 1819 to 1898 documents written by influential people of both theological and intellectual traditions, that though sharing the “revivalists’ faith commitment” and desiring the good for the Christian cause in United States believed that revivals were harming more than helping the church, see James D. Bratt, ed., *Antirevivalism in Antebellum America: A Collection of Religious Voices* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006); also idem, “Religious Anti-Revivalism in Antebellum America,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 24 (Spring 2004): 65–106. Bratt points out that the antirevivalist’s main charges concerned the “excitement” indulged (emotional), liturgy (how people worshiped), polity (modes of church governance), theology (Calvinism and Arminianism), and lack of proper education of some revivalist preachers and laity (Bratt, *Antirevivalism*, xviii–xxiii).

<sup>68</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 25–26. In the first accounts of her life, she wrote that she was 12-year-old when she got baptized, what would put this event to about 1840 (Ellen G. White, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience* [1851], in idem, *Early Writings*, 11; idem, “Communications,” *YI*, December 1852, 21; idem, *Spiritual Gifts* [1860], 2:13). In her later autobiographies, however, she used, “Young as I was,” instead of pointing to a specific age (James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 145; idem, *Testimonies*, 1:19; cf. idem, *Life Sketches* (1915), 25; idem, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 25). She was baptized June 26, 1842, therefore, when she was 14-year-old (Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:37; Burt, “Ellen G. Harmon’s Three Step Conversion,” 20, 21).

In June 1842, Miller came back to Portland and Ellen attended the meetings.<sup>69</sup> She was glad about the meetings, for she had fallen upon discouragements lately and did not feel prepared to meet Jesus.<sup>70</sup> The situation in Portland at this time was different than it had been two years before. The lectures created “much more excitement in the city” than before, but they were not looked on with favor by some denominations. The doors of most of the churches were closed against Miller, and several pastors used their pulpits “to expose the alleged fanatical errors of the lecturer.” In spite of the opposition, “crowds of anxious listeners attended his meetings” and many were unable to enter the auditorium. Miller’s courteous and sympathetic manners attracted many people, who were then convinced of the power of his message through his explanations of biblical prophecies.<sup>71</sup>

#### Confused upon the Theme of Sanctification

Ellen deeply believed Miller’s words about the soon coming of Christ and frequently attended the meetings. The proximity of the event, however, filled her with

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<sup>69</sup> Miller lectured in Portland in June 4–12, just few days before Ellen’s baptism (Burt, “Ellen G. Harmon’s Three Step Conversion,” 22).

<sup>70</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 28. An important matter that Ellen White later included in her autobiographical works regarding her childhood spiritual journey was her experience reading “religious biographies of children,” which focused greatly on the fact that they “had possessed numberless virtues and lived faultless lives.” These models, instead of encouraging Ellen, were “as stumbling-blocks” to her, although she was struggling to reach a sanctified life. She affirmed, based on her own experience, that “these biographies of immaculate children mislead the young,” and would confuse the mind of a child. She would constantly say, “If that is true, I can never be a Christian. I can never hope to be like these children.” Ellen pointed out that these biographies became more of an impediment than a blessing in the spiritual journey of one who was struggling. A more flesh-and-bone record would encourage children, as they would see that although they experienced trials, they could overcome “through the grace of God” (idem, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 22–23; cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:26). Another thing that troubled little Ellen was seeing pictures in classic Christian books of “horrible acts of cruelty” done to the martyrs. Besides keeping those scenes in her mind, which scared her, she “almost lost confidence in God because He allowed such things.” She stated, “It was a long time before I could overcome the impression made on my mind.” “Such pictures,” she concluded, “do not increase faith” (“Ellen G. White to Those in Responsible Positions in our Publishing Houses,” [Lt 18] January, 1897).

<sup>71</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 28.



great anxiety to be ready. Her understanding of sanctification was confusing. Some Methodists interpreted ecstatic physical experiences (e.g., loss of “physical strength under the influence of strong mental excitement”) as “evidence of sanctification.” Her inability to experience the spiritual ecstasy that seemed to be tangible confirmation of a genuine conversion confused her concerning what was “necessary in order to be fully consecrated to God.” To Ellen, it seemed as if she was “forever shut out from the perfect joy of holiness of heart.”<sup>72</sup> The need to reach “some higher attainment” in order to be prepared to meet Jesus distressed her. Lack of assurance and despair were her fate again. The common doctrine of an eternal hell burning the unsaved terrified her. In her mind, “the justice of God eclipsed His mercy and love.” She “seemed to already feel the pains of perdition.” These thoughts filled her with a “very great” “mental anguish.”<sup>73</sup> God was presented as “a tyrant, who delighted in the agonies of the condemned” instead of a “tender, pitying Friend of sinners, who loves His creatures ... and desires them to be saved in His kingdom.”<sup>74</sup>

This teaching, which emphasized the fate of the lost instead of the mercy and love of God, depressed Ellen. Analyzing the situation years later, she concluded, “Could the truth have been presented to me as I now understand it, my despondency would have taken flight at once, much perplexity and sorrow would have been spared me.” If the presentation stressed more of the “love of God” and less of “His stern justice,” she might have overcome the “almost total darkness” that burdened her mind and the anguish that

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<sup>72</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 30.

<sup>73</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 31–32.

<sup>74</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 32–33.

led her even to fear of losing her reason. Had the sermons exposed “the beauty and glory” of God’s character, she concluded, it “would have inspired me with a deep and earnest love for my Creator.”<sup>75</sup>

#### Lack of Self-Confidence

Shyness was another impediment to Ellen’s spiritual growth.<sup>76</sup> She suffered intensely in her mind with the fact that she should go to prayer meetings, but her timidity about praying or witnessing in public prevented her. The impression was vivid in her mind that she should gather with others. She felt as if she was disobeying God. Her mental sufferings increased, and she spent long nights “praying silently with a dumb agony that cannot be described.” The struggle affected her physically. She “became very much reduced in flesh and strength.” In her depressed state, death was desirable, but she dared not die in her unsanctified state and face the horrors of hell.<sup>77</sup>

In this gloomy state, she had two dreams that made an impact on her. In the first, she saw a temple filled with people who had confessed their sins and humbled themselves before “a lamb all mangled and bleeding.” She felt the need to confess her sins as well, but a “sense of shame” at humbling herself before those people restrained her. She slowly

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<sup>75</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 33. She adds, “Those who teach the doctrine of an eternal hell, would do well to look more closely after their authority for so cruel a belief” (idem, *Life Sketches* [1880, 1888], 153; idem, *Testimonies*, 1:26).

<sup>76</sup> She was ashamed even to the point of not liking her own family to see her reading the Bible or praying. “If I was reading my Bible,” she wrote, “and my parents would be coming into the room, I would hide it for shame” (Ellen G. White, “Communications,” *YT*, December 1852, 20–21). She feared that they might see the anguish she was experiencing. She penned, “Sometimes for a whole night I would not dare to close my eyes, but would wait until my twin sister was fast asleep, then quietly leave my bed and kneel upon the floor, praying silently with a dumb agony that cannot be described. The horrors of an eternally burning hell were ever before me” (idem, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 35).

<sup>77</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 35–36.

moved forward, but it was too late. A “trumpet sounded” and the “assembled saints” disappeared with “an awful brightness,” while Ellen “was left alone in the silent horror of night.” She “awoke in agony of mind” and anguish, hardly believing it had been a nightmare. It seemed the dream had been terminal and her doom had been fixed. She felt comfort, however, with another dream. In the dream, she stood before someone of a “beautiful countenance” and “radiant expression of benevolence and majesty [which] could belong to no other” but “Jesus.” He smiled and said, “Fear not,” which led her to prostrate herself at his feet. This dream restored hope in young Ellen.<sup>78</sup>

Levi Stockman

The dreams encouraged Ellen to confide her sorrows in her mother, a woman of prayer,<sup>79</sup> who advised her to seek counsel with Elder Stockman, an Adventist preacher in Portland. This experience of frankly talking to her mother was important for Ellen. It helps in forming a more secure person. As Garland points out, a person “can venture out into the world more securely because they know that, when they return home, they will be welcomed, nourished physically and emotionally, and comforted if distressed.”<sup>80</sup>

Ellen opened her heart to Elder Stockman. He felt that in this young girl’s “most singular experience,” Jesus was preparing her “for some special work.” Stockman tenderly talked to her about the love and mercy of Jesus. His words greatly affected Ellen and filled her with comfort, encouragement, and hope. The conversation taught Ellen more about “God’s love and pitying tenderness than from all sermons and exhortations”

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<sup>78</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 36–39.

<sup>79</sup> Ellen G. White, “Communications,” *YI*, December 1852, 20–21.

<sup>80</sup> Garland, *Family Ministry*, 58.

she had ever heard. She then felt comfort and reached the point of being able to freely pray in public. That public demonstration took away “the burden and agony of soul” that she had long endured. She felt the power of the Holy Spirit, and her views of God were changed.<sup>81</sup>

Ellen then began a new journey, where she actively participated in prayer meetings and began arranging religious meetings with young friends. She now freely and joyfully prayed and related her experience in public gatherings. The assurance of “a kind and tender parent” in heaven led her to feel joy in obeying God’s will. She said it was as if she “had been rescued from hell and transported to heaven.” “I could even praise God,” she continues, “for the misfortune that had been the trial of my life, for it had been the means of fixing my thoughts upon eternity.” Had the “sore affliction” not cut her off “from the triumphs and vanities of the world,” she “might not have been inclined to give” her “naturally proud and ambitious” heart to Christ and find comfort in Jesus.<sup>82</sup> Her adversity not only led her to think and meditate upon heavenly matters, but also “kept [her] from society,” preserving her “in blissful ignorance” and saving her from the depraved influence of the young.<sup>83</sup>

### Disassociation from the Methodist Church

The new phase in Ellen’s spiritual life represented a great change: she went from a timid girl who never prayed in public and uttered few words in prayer meetings to an

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<sup>81</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 39–42.

<sup>82</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 43, cf. 41–47; cf. Ellen G. White, “Notes of Travel,” *RH*, November 25, 1884, 737.

<sup>83</sup> Ellen G. White, *An Appeal to Mothers: The Great Cause of the Physical, Mental, and Moral Ruin of Many of the Children of Our Time* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1864), 12.

active girl who began freely and joyfully sharing her testimony publicly and arranging meetings with her young friends. The salvation of others became the burden of her life.

The Harmon family's excitement over the premillennialist Second Coming of Christ brought on them the disapproval of their Methodist congregation, who had a postmillennial mindset.<sup>84</sup> The Harmon's public acceptance of the soon appearance of the Lord led to the whole family being "discontinued from the church." No biblical reason was given to prove they were in error. The charge was that they "had been guilty of walking contrary to the rules of the Methodist Church."<sup>85</sup>

### Time Approaching

As the expected time of the Second Coming approached, enthusiasm grew among Millerites in Portland.<sup>86</sup> Many had been expelled from their churches; but despite that and the opposition of some ministers, the Millerites crowded into rented auditoriums and met daily to worship and encourage each other. Private houses also served as places for meetings. Their piety and enthusiasm awoke interest in others, and "conversions were

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<sup>84</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 49. Postmillennialism emerged in the seventeenth century and was developed by Daniel Whitby (1638–1726), an English theologian. According to this view the world would progress toward 1000 years of peace and would be "filled with the knowledge of the Lord" (Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 49), and at the end of this period Christ would return. This view dominated Christian thinking especially in England and America during the nineteenth-century (see Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, 2:651–655).

<sup>85</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 60.

<sup>86</sup> William Miller never gave a specific date for the Second Coming. According to his studies, he always referred to it as "about the year 1843 ... if there were no mistake" in his calculation. By the end of 1842, however, he was being "censured" for his lack of exactness and coerced to be more specific. He then suggested that according to his calculations of the 2300 years (Dan 8:14), the event of the coming of Jesus would occur in the Jewish year, "sometime between March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1843 and March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1844" (Wm. Miller, *Apology and Defence*, 24).

multiplying day by day.”<sup>87</sup> The attitude while waiting for the expected time of the Second Coming was of a “most intense longing.” Their days and hours were spent with “a calm solemnity,” and resting “in a sweet communion with God.”<sup>88</sup>

### Disappointments

The time passed, and the disappointment was great. Scoffers abounded, and the test made some desert the cause. Ellen and her family, though “sadly disappointed,” did not renounce their faith or become discouraged. Further study revealed that the right date should be October 22, 1844, and Millerites centered their hope on that. Their faith was revived and their work to teach others became more intense. Ellen, though suffering from very poor health, engaged in visiting and prayer with others. Those days were filled with an evangelistic enthusiasm and that year became the “happiest year” of Ellen’s life.<sup>89</sup>

Once more, the expected time “passed unmarked by the advent of Jesus.” Ellen suffered a bitter disappointment again, but she was “not disheartened.”<sup>90</sup> Ellen’s faith at this time was well grounded. Although she had felt despair and lack of assurance in previous years, she now had lived through an intimate experience with Jesus and her faith

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<sup>87</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 69. The Harmon’s home became a place for meetings (James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* [1880, 1888], 130–131). Adventists in Portland, Maine used the Beethoven Hall (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:38, 48–49). Millerism initially was an interdenominational movement. Beginning in 1842, however, was created in some places the so-called Second Adventist Associations. It was not seen as a replacement for church attendance, but as a supplement, usually meeting at Sunday afternoons. They were composed of believers within the Protestant denominations who continued to attend the regular worship services in their churches but believed in the soon Second Coming of Christ. While not a church they did collect funds, elect officers and hold Bible class for the study of advent truth (see Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 151–153; idem, *William Miller*, 127–129).

<sup>88</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 71–72.

<sup>89</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 72–73, 75.

<sup>90</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 78–79.

had grown. She was ready to face one of the great disappointments of her life; despite the disappointment, she did not lose her conviction that Christ loved her, and that her experience had been relevant and real. Neither did she lose faith in the coming of Jesus.

Though strong in faith, Ellen was very weak physically at this time. She was diagnosed as having “dropsical consumption.” She was able to talk only in “a whisper, or broken tone of her voice.” Only one of her lungs was working and very affected. The doctor’s prognosis was not optimistic; he thought she would die very soon.<sup>91</sup> Her life nevertheless was spared, and she lived for several decades and became one of the main founders of Seventh-day Adventism.

### Summary

Ellen Harmon’s early days were marked by an intense spiritual dilemma. She saw her unworthiness as an impediment to full surrender and the assurance of being accepted by God. Her introverted personality almost destroyed her spirituality and life. She kept her troubles and distresses to herself, and it shattered her joy and energy. The accident played an important role in devastating her self-esteem and ending her dreams of a formal education. The teachings of an eternal burning hell and an emphasis on the justice of God, almost to the detriment of His love, almost left her hopeless. The spiritual ecstasy interpreted as evidence of sanctification, and her inability to attain it, confused her understanding of what was necessary to be saved.

Ellen’s times of distress were mixed with times of hope and assurance. The Millerite teaching of the imminent return of Jesus filled her with joy and fear. Her fear of

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<sup>91</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 77.

sharing her troubles with others led her to an intimate relationship with God. As she lived these tense years, she got baptized in 1842, and opened her heart to her mother. She then was led to an interview with Elder Stockman, who graciously opened her mind to the goodness and love of God. She understood sanctification, surrendered to God, and was transformed from a timid, confused self-absorbed Christian to a confident and converted Christian who prioritized the salvation of others. Her family was disassociated from her local church, and she suffered two disappointments concerning the expected dates for the Second Coming of Jesus, but these did not discourage or destroy her faith. Ellen's experiences transformed her into a faithful believer and prepared her for a life of working for others.

### Conclusion

This chapter presented the early experiences of James and Ellen. The experiences lived in their early years played a role in forming James and Ellen. It is well recognized that "each spouse's experiences growing up in his or her particular family of origin are major preparations for marriage."<sup>92</sup> As it can be seen in the previous pages, "There was much in common in the early life experiences of James White and Ellen Harmon."<sup>93</sup>

They both were born and raised in hardworking, large families. They both were raised in active and faithful Christian homes. Their parents were open to new discoveries in the Bible and followed what they saw as the truth. The White and Harmon families did not share the same biblical convictions; however, both James and Ellen were raised in

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<sup>92</sup> Balswick and Balswick, *The Family*, 73.

<sup>93</sup> William C. White, "Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: II," 4.



homes where their parents were committed to the Bible, searchers of truth, willing to stand for their beliefs, and active in their specific denominations. In the 1840s, both the White and Harmon families shared the religious experience of becoming followers of Millerism. Thus James and Ellen, though they did not yet know each other, were united in the same hope of a premillennial and soon coming of Christ and both experienced the Great Disappointment.

They both had high expectations regarding studying and were affected by infirmities that frustrated their dreams. James later recovered and continued his studies. When he recovered, he almost rejected religion for schooling, but later returned to religion. Ellen, because of her fragile health, gave up school, and after a deep spiritual stress, was converted. Both were led to practical education for living.

Ellen's spiritual experiences were more intense than James's, but he also experienced a thorough surrender to God in his teen years. They both experienced spiritual struggles and became vibrant Christians. James became a preacher in Maine, while Ellen became an exhorter among her friends and others in Portland. This is a very significant point that connects their individual experiences. They both, in their own sphere, had a clear sense of mission and love for the cause of preaching and exhorting about the soon coming of Jesus. After their deep experience of conversion, mission occupied a central position in their own lives. The disappointment shattered their spiritual dreams of immediately meeting Jesus personally and literally, but did not destroy their faith.

The resemblances showed above were bonds that helped James and Ellen as they later formed a new family, since "the most stable marriages are those involving two

people with many similarities.”<sup>94</sup> They came to see that they “were being fitted by the Master Workman for a united part in His service.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Neil Clark Warren, *Finding the Love of Your Life* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), 48.

<sup>95</sup> William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: II,” 4.

## CHAPTER 4

### FROM FIRST INTERACTION TO ROCHESTER (1845–1855)

#### Introduction

Soon after the Great Disappointment during the fall of 1844, the lives of James White and Ellen Harmon radically changed. They began as minor, almost insignificant figures in the Millerite movement, but came to have a major influence on the development of the movement that later became known as Seventh-day Adventism. Their joining in marriage and ministry led to the organization of a denomination that spread throughout the world. The purpose of this chapter is to describe and analyze the major facts, situations, and contexts that affected the relationship between James and Ellen during the decade they first interacted, married, and formed a team ministry.

#### Chronological Overview

##### The Calling of Ellen Harmon

A few weeks after the Great Disappointment, probably in December 1844, while praying with four other young women, Ellen Harmon had a singular experience. “The power of God came upon me as I had never felt before,” she wrote. She received a vision pointing out the validity of the Millerite movement (Midnight Cry), the certainty of a

literal and visible Second Coming, the reality of a literal heaven, and the assurance of triumph for those who kept their eyes on Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Because of her timid personality, Ellen at first avoided telling others about the vision. The fear of presenting a message contrary to what most of the Millerites in Portland believed shook her confidence. Only after a “severe soul-conflict” did she decide to relate what she had seen in the vision to the company in her hometown, and “about sixty” people accepted the message that the Midnight Cry had been “the work of God.”<sup>2</sup>

In a second vision just a week later, Ellen received a call to “go and relate” the visions. The calling troubled her “exceedingly.” It would involve meeting people and traveling, in addition to facing fierce opposition and trials. Her old fears were revived. In addition to her youth and poor health, her old timidity and fear of meeting strangers devastated her. She prayed to have this burden removed, but the words from the vision pointing to her responsibility “sounded continually.” Death seemed more desirable than the “responsibilities that were crowding upon” her.<sup>3</sup> As pointed out by Roy Graham,

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:58–61; idem, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:30–34. It is outside the scope of this research to study the spiritual gifts of Ellen White, and the goal of this dissertation is not to prove or disprove the validity of White’s prophetic gift. Since James openly and fully accepted the gift experienced by his wife, this investigation will only focus on how it affected their relationship.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White to Joseph Bates, (Lt 3) July 13, 1847; cf. [James White], untitled, *WLF*, 22; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:62–63; William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White,” *RH*, March 14, 1935, 9.

<sup>3</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 193–195; cf. William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White,” *RH*, March 14, 1935, 9.

“The receipt of the visions created another crisis for Ellen Harmon.”<sup>4</sup> Her self-confidence was low, and she despaired,

At length the sweet peace I had so long enjoyed left me, and despair again pressed upon my soul. My prayers all seemed vain, and my faith was gone. Words of comfort, reproof, or encouragement were alike to me; for it seemed that no one could understand me but God, and He had forsaken me.<sup>5</sup>

The mission of traveling scared Ellen. She penned, “the work looked great, and the trials severe. The idea of a female traveling from place to place caused me to draw back.”<sup>6</sup> Her family could not accompany her, and traveling without a male companion was a frightening thought for a woman in the nineteenth century. In those days, although more women were moving outside the protection of the home and looking for jobs, there was a “rising preoccupation with sexual danger for women.” Women were instructed to “use male protectors or to follow strict rules of behavior (such as modest dress, veils, and reserved conversation) to avoid overfamiliarity with strangers.”<sup>7</sup>

Ellen had another vision while Adventists in Portland met at her home for prayer. Again, the message of going and relating the visions to others was brought up. Assurance came to her through the vision and the testimony of some present in the meeting, and she

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<sup>4</sup> Roy E. Graham, “Ellen G. White: An Examination of Her Position and Role in the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 1977), 26; idem., *Ellen G. White: Co-Founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1985), 26.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:63.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:36.

<sup>7</sup> Patricia Cline Cohen, “Safety and Danger: Women on American Public Transport, 1750–1850,” in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women’s History*, ed. Dorothy O. Helly and Susan M. Reverby (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 119.

decided from then on to commit herself “to the Lord, ready to do his bidding whatever that might be.”<sup>8</sup>

### James Meets Ellen

During the first half of 1845, Ellen began to expand her influence and interaction with Adventists in Maine and other adjacent states. She visited several places close to her home in Portland, and began going on more extensive trips.<sup>9</sup> While visiting the city of Orrington with William Jordan and his sister in the beginning of 1845, Ellen met James White, a young Adventist preacher. James became a trusted companion and soon joined the team who traveled with Ellen as she shared her visions.

### Marriage and Family

Due to their fervent acceptance of an imminent Second Coming, James and Ellen had no thought of marriage. As they worked together, however, they developed a friendly affinity. Their pursuit of the same goals led James and Ellen to be united in marriage on August 30, 1846.

The Whites began their married life with scarcity of means, and of health. As soon as they married, they went to live with Ellen’s parents in Gorham, Maine.<sup>10</sup> Their ministry involved traveling almost constantly, and their need to visit scattered brethren

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<sup>8</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 94; cf. 92–93; “Interview with Mrs. E. G. White Regarding Early Experiences,” Ms 131, 1906.

<sup>9</sup> She visited in early 1845, eastern Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont (Burt, “Historical Background, 127; cf. 129ff). She then expanded the field, and her “first visit to Massachusetts was in August, 1845, accompanied by her older sister and Brother James White” (O[tis] Nichols, “Statement by Otis Nichols,” n.d., 1; DF 105, CAR-AU).

<sup>10</sup> James White to Stockbridge Howland, March 14, 1847.

and share Sabbatarian Adventist doctrines forced them to live in different places during their first decade together, usually accepting the hospitality of friends. During this period, they also had three sons: Henry Nichols, born on August 26, 1847, in Gorham, Maine; James Edson, born on July 28, 1849, in Rocky Hill, Connecticut; and William Clarence, born on August 29, 1854, in Rochester, New York.<sup>11</sup>

### Ministering Together

At that time, influenced by a booklet by Joseph Bates, the Whites accepted the seventh-day Sabbath and the law of God as still valid and held that believers had a duty to obey them. The autumn of 1846 marked the time they not only “began to observe the Bible Sabbath,” but also began to enthusiastically preach and defend it.<sup>12</sup>

Joseph Bates and the Whites formed the nucleus of Sabbatarian Adventists. In May 1847, they published their first joint publication, *A Word to the “Little Flock.”* The Sabbatarian leaders and others were united in their major distinctive doctrines, and held several local and general meetings to study the Bible and reconfirm their doctrinal convictions. During the next two years (1848–1850), “the scattered friends of the

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<sup>11</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:87, 116, 192.

<sup>12</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 269; James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 128; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:75. For a history of the Sabbath among Millerites and in the period post-fall 1844 to 1846, see J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. rev. (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1887), 498–508; Raymond F. Cottrell, “The Sabbath in the New World,” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 244–263; Burt, “Historical Background,” 45–55, 58–59, 119–127, 169–170, 225–230, 254–260, 271–301, 316–351.

Sabbath” gathered in general conferences for more than twenty times.<sup>13</sup> The presence of the Whites at these conferences was important to maintain the doctrinal and missiological unity of the small group.<sup>14</sup>

In 1848 and 1849, the Sabbatarian Adventists recognized the need to publish their views in a regular periodical for a broader audience. Thus, James began the publication of the *Present Truth* in July 1849.<sup>15</sup> Financial difficulties, poor health, and lack of support from other leaders almost made James stop the publication, but with the support of his wife, he persevered. In 1850, James and a publishing committee of four others edited and published six issues of a periodical entitled *The Advent Review*.<sup>16</sup> In September, they published a condensed forty-eight-page reprint of articles from *The Advent Review*.<sup>17</sup> In November 1850, James merged the *Present Truth* and the *Advent Review* into the *Second*

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<sup>13</sup> [James White], “A Brief Sketch of the Past,” *RH*, May 6, 1852, 5. There were probably, six in 1848, six in 1849 [the Whites attended at least 3], ten in 1850 [the Whites attended eight] (*SDA Encyclopedia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev., s.v. “Sabbath Conferences”).

<sup>14</sup> J. N. Loughborough, “Recollections of the Past—No. 12,” *RH*, March 3, 1885, 137–138; idem, *Rise and Progress*, 138; James White, *Life Incidents*, 274; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:97–98. For an insightful description and analysis of the meetings, see Burt, “Historical Background,” 352–363; Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, 1:1021–1048; Arthur L. White, “The Sabbath Conferences of 1848,” *Ministry*, May 1941, 16–18; idem, *Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant*, 38–40.

<sup>15</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 290. James published eleven issues of the *Present Truth*, from July 1849 to November 1850. The first four were published in Middletown, Connecticut; the next six in Oswego, New York; and the last one in Paris, Maine.

<sup>16</sup> The first four issues (August and September) were published in Auburn, New York. An *Extra* issue was also published in September, probably in Auburn as well. The other regular issue dates from November, and was published in Paris, Maine.

<sup>17</sup> *The Advent Review, Containing Thrilling Testimonies, Written in the Holy Spirit, By Many of the Leaders in the Second Advent Cause, Showing Its Divine Origin and Progress* (Auburn, [NY]: Henry Oliphant, 1850). James White, Hiram Edson, David Arnold, George W. Holt, and Samuel W. Rhodes formed the publishing committee.



*Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, which came to be known as the *Review and Herald*.<sup>18</sup>

Rochester, New York (April 1852 – October 1855)

In April 1852, the Whites and the publishing office moved to Rochester, New York.<sup>19</sup> The Sabbatarian Adventists also purchased their first printing press. These two events marked a “new and important era” in the cause.<sup>20</sup> Having their own press facilitated other adventures, and soon James launched a monthly periodical for youth, *The Youth’s Instructor*,<sup>21</sup> and several tracts.<sup>22</sup> In October 1855, the *Review* office moved to Michigan, where the Whites began a new phase in their lives and in the history of Sabbatarian Adventism.

#### Relationship between James and Ellen

#### Marriage in the Early Nineteenth Century

Marriage was viewed very seriously in nineteenth-century America. Marital union has been termed as an interactional process of building a common reality between two

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<sup>18</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 292–293; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:143. The nomadic life of the Whites was responsible for the *RH*’s different places of publication: Paris, ME (1850–June 1851); Saratoga Springs, NY (July 1851–March 1852); Rochester, NY (May 1852–October 1855); Battle Creek, MI (December 1855–) (*SDA Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Adventist Review”).

<sup>19</sup> [James White], “The Conference,” *RH*, March 23, 1852, 108. Rochester was a city with religious connections, and had been an important center in the Second Great Awakening (Johnson, *A Shopkeeper’s Millennium*; cf. Wheeler, *James White*, 70–71).

<sup>20</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 293.

<sup>21</sup> The first number was issued in August 1852.

<sup>22</sup> Loughborough, *Rise and Progress*, 168–169; cf. idem, “Looking Backward,” *RH*, July 31, 1919, 15.

persons intended to last a lifetime.<sup>23</sup> In the nineteenth-century, it had four overlapping elements:

(1) marriage *united* a man and a woman, giving them a singular identity; (2) marriage *transformed* men and women into husbands and wives; (3) marriage produced a public relationship, the terms of which were *not negotiable* by the parties; and (4) marriage effected a *permanent* transformation, one that would continue as long as both husband and wife survived.<sup>24</sup>

Society expected people to marry and raise children. Women were expected to be good wives and mothers and education was seen as a pathway to it.<sup>25</sup> Some writers in the nineteenth century explored the idea of holding character values and looking for compatibility, counseling people to avoid marrying non-Christians or those engaged in vicious habits.<sup>26</sup> Women were advised to explore, but also moderate, their natural sensibility and romantic inclination so as not to destroy their lives by “the mere gratification of a paltry ambition, or to the indulgence of a morbid sentimentalism,” which would lead to fantasies and subdue common sense.<sup>27</sup> It was thought that marriage should be grounded not on ephemeral passions, but on sympathy and common interests. The ideal “romantic love that prevailed in the mid 1800s stressed mutuality, commonality, and sympathy between man and woman.” A solid union was to be founded

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<sup>23</sup> John Witte, Jr., *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

<sup>24</sup> Hendrik A. Hartog, “Marital Exits and Marital Expectations in Nineteenth Century America,” *Georgetown Law Journal* 80 (1991): 96–97.

<sup>25</sup> Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Wife* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2001), 195.

<sup>26</sup> Frances B. Cogan, *All American-Girl: The Ideal Womanhood in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 103, 137–138.

<sup>27</sup> Mrs. John Sandford, *Woman in Her Social and Domestic Character* (Boston, MA: Otis, Broaders, & Co., 1843), 111, 113, 118, cf. 111–124.

not on emotions, but on “appreciation of each other’s character.” This exercise to create “bonds of sympathy and confidence” required concerted effort.<sup>28</sup>

Free choice was the basis for family formation. Though parental guidance was important, affection and mutual respect between the conjugal pair was stressed as the mark of the union.<sup>29</sup> The early nineteenth century in America also marked the transition from secluded weddings to more elaborate ceremonies, usually in a church, with larger audiences of relatives and friends.<sup>30</sup>

### Courtship and Marriage of James and Ellen

James and Ellen first became acquainted in 1845. After the Disappointment in the fall of 1844, James returned to his father’s farm to help his family prepare for the coming winter. Though the experience had been painful, James decided not to give up his confidence in the literal coming of Jesus.<sup>31</sup> Soon he heard about Ellen, who was having visions related to the Millerite experience. On a visit to Orrington to retrieve a horse that William Jordan had borrowed from him, he had the opportunity to hear about Ellen’s visions. James, who was a Millerite preacher and had been avidly “engaged in work for

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<sup>28</sup> Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 107–108.

<sup>29</sup> Carl N. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1980), 8–9, cf. 8–19; E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1993), 109–119.

<sup>30</sup> Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 129.

<sup>31</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 182–184; V. Robinson, *James White*, 33–34.

the salvation of souls,”<sup>32</sup> felt a calling to encourage Adventists and combat the fanatical theories that were rampant among some of them.

Though Ellen had committed herself to fulfill her calling, the burden weighed heavily on her feeble shoulders. Poor health, young age, shyness, fear of exaltation, and traveling difficulties were some of the obstacles to the fulfillment of her mission. The partnership she developed with James seemed to ease her burden. The conviction that Ellen’s “wonderful experience and work was of God” satisfied James with the thought that it “was his duty to accompany” Ellen and those who were with her, usually her older sister or other women. Soon James became part of the team who traveled with Ellen.<sup>33</sup> Unpleasant rumors about Ellen traveling with a young man reached her mother’s ears, and her mother begged Ellen to return home. Those “false reports” were “an unexpected blow” that seriously distressed Ellen’s heart—first, for bringing sorrow to her mother; second, for bringing a shadow upon her reputation with false testimony; and finally, because she could not return home due to the seriousness of her mission.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1915), 73.

<sup>33</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 238. Despite some accusations, there is evidence that they never traveled alone (*Life Sketches* [1880, 1888], 202; Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* [1915], 77); Ellen G. White to John N. Loughborough, (Lt 2) August 24, 1874; “Interview with Mrs. E. G. White Regarding Early Experiences,” Ms 131, 1906; cf. Otis Nichols, “Statement by Otis Nichols,” n.d., 1–4, DF 105, CAR-AU. Other men had proposed to accompany Ellen, but she could not trust them. However, she says, “[I was instructed] that I could trust Elder James White, he would guard me, and I was in no danger” (“Interview with Mrs. E. G. White Regarding Early Experiences,” Ms 131, 1906; brackets are in the original).

<sup>34</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 197–198; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:39; idem, *Testimonies*, 1:66. For some accusations and the defense presented by SDAs, see *Defense of Elder James White and Wife: Vindication of Their Moral and Christian Character* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1870), 109–111. Ellen reflecting on that time wrote years later, “I rejoice in God that not a spot or blemish can be fastened upon my name or character. . . . We have in all our deportment, before and since our marriage, tried to abstain from even the appearance of evil” (Ellen G. White to John N. Loughborough, [Lt 2] August 24, 1874).

The imminence of the Second Coming of Jesus put marriage out of their thoughts at first. James stated, “We both viewed the coming of Christ near, even at the doors, and when we first met had no idea of marriage at any future time.”<sup>35</sup> Circumstances and their “great work,” however, led James to ponder that they “could greatly assist each other in that work.” “As she should come before the public,” reasoned James, “she needed a lawful protector, and God having chosen her as a channel of light and truth to the people in a special sense, she could be of great help to me.” Thus, James proposed marriage to Ellen about a year after they met.<sup>36</sup>

However, the fact that they would be a blessing to each other was not enough; James and Ellen took the matter to God. “It was not until the matter of marriage was taken to the Lord by both,” wrote James, “and we obtained an experience that placed the matter beyond the reach of doubt, that we took this important step.” Ellen concurred that their “hearts were united in the great work.”<sup>37</sup> Knight points out that in the setting of “immediacy” that was the perspective of those setting dates for the Second Coming, James and Ellen, though they continued to believe in a soon Second Coming, “had more fully grasped the occupy till he comes horn of the Adventist dilemma.” He then concludes, “Marriage for the Whites became a necessary means to the end of the

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<sup>35</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 126; cf. James White, “Letter from Bro. White,” *Day-Star*, October 11, 1845, 47; “Interview with Mrs. E. G. White Regarding Early Experiences,” Ms 131, 1906.

<sup>36</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 126; “Interview with Mrs. E. G. White Regarding Early Experiences,” Ms 131, 1906.

<sup>37</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 126; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:75; idem, *Life Sketches*, 97. Their granddaughter wrote, “as she [Ellen] prayed, she felt more and more that God did want them to work together. The answer did not come by vision. The Holy Spirit spoke quietly to her heart, ... Not until James and Ellen were certain that it was God’s will were they married” (Ella M. Robinson, *Stories of My Grandmother* [Nashville, TN: Southern, 1967], 39)

furtherance of the preaching of the Advent message. On the other hand, their marriage also pointed to their acceptance of the continuity of time.”<sup>38</sup>

This experience did not exclude affection, sympathy, feeling good being together, or love. As noted by their son William, “It is evident that through the experiences shared in common by James White and Ellen Harmon at Orrington, Exeter, and Garland, there was created a mutual bond of sympathy between them.”<sup>39</sup> With proximity and commonality, they developed admiration, respect, and love that led to their marriage.<sup>40</sup> Love is included here, though it is a word that does not appear in their own accounts of their courtship and marriage, because Ellen wrote several years later that love must be part of a marital attachment.

Marriage is something that will influence and affect your life, both in this world, and in the world to come. A sincere Christian will not advance his plans in this direction without the knowledge that God approves his course. He will not want to choose for himself, but will feel that God must choose for him. We are not to please ourselves, for Christ pleased not himself. I would not be understood to mean that any one is to marry one whom he does not love. This would be sin. But fancy and the emotional nature must not be allowed to lead on to ruin.<sup>41</sup>

She wrote that she once inquired of a girl whether she really loved the young man who was proposing to her: “I asked her if ... she loved Albert well enough to link her

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<sup>38</sup> George R. Knight, *If I Were the Devil: Seeing through the Enemy’s Smokescreen: Contemporary Challenges Facing Adventism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2007), 254–255.

<sup>39</sup> William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White,” *RH*, March 14, 1935, 11.

<sup>40</sup> *SDA Encyclopedia*, s.v. “White, Ellen Gould (Harmon).”

<sup>41</sup> Ellen G. White, “Marrying and Giving in Marriage,” *RH*, September 25, 1888, 610.

interests with his for life.... I told her that ... she should give no encouragement to the attentions of any young man [by] showing him preference unless she loved him.”<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, as pointed out by Ronald Graybill, James and Ellen “needed more than romantic interests to justify their marriage.”<sup>43</sup> The idea of marrying was not welcomed by all of their friends; to marry in a time when the end of the world was imminent was considered a denial of the faith. James penned, “Most of our brethren who believed with us that the Second Advent movement was the work of God were opposed to marriage in the sense that as time was very short it was a denial of faith, as such a union contemplated long years of married life.” The announcement of their engagement was received badly by some, but soon most of their friends accepted it.<sup>44</sup>

James “linked life’s destiny in marriage with Miss Ellen”<sup>45</sup> on August 30, 1846, in Portland, Maine. James was twenty-five years old and Ellen was eighteen.<sup>46</sup> Due to poverty and their lack of affiliation with any Christian denomination, they had only the

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<sup>42</sup> Ellen G. White to Albert [Vuilleumier?], (Lt 23) September 23, 1886. Graybill adds, “While there is nothing to indicate that any gushingly romantic attachment developed between them, their closeness on these trips must have led to deep respect and mutual trust, a sense of dependence upon each other, and finally a particularly personal sense of responsibility on the part of James” (Ron[ald] Graybill, “The Courtship of Ellen Harmon,” *Insight*, January 23, 1973, 6).

<sup>43</sup> Graybill, “The Power of Prophecy,” 6.

<sup>44</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 126; James White to Philip Collins, August 26, 1846.

<sup>45</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 125.

<sup>46</sup> “Marriages,” *Portland Bulletin*, September 8, 1846; “Marriages,” *Tribune and Bulletin*, September 11, 1846, 200; James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 126, 238; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:83. Ellen’s young age at marriage was below the average for the middle nineteenth century in America; young women were delaying marriage to a mean age of 24.4 in 1839 (James M. Volo and Dorothy Denneen Volo, *Family Life in Nineteenth-century America* [Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007], 33).

simple civil ceremony required by law. Ellen's surname then changed from Harmon to White.

It is interesting to note that when James and Ellen decided to marry each other, though they were young, they had already basically resolved the other two "greatest decisions" of their lives.<sup>47</sup> They had already decided that their religion would be to follow God's leading based in a responsible reading of the Bible and obeying whatever they found in it. They also had basically decided on what they would be doing for life, and that was the mission of preaching the gospel that was to take priority in the purpose of their lives. The choosing of a mate had to follow the basic criteria; someone who loved the same Master (God), and would help in the fulfillment of their mission.

The marriage of the Whites followed basic premises of a good relationship, not diminishing the value and place of prayer that played an essential role in their decision for wedding. Summarizing the "dyadic-formation theory" elaborated by Robert Lewis, Balswick and Balswick point out that a dating relationship basically develops

through six stages of increasing seriousness: (1) perception of similarities in each other's background, values, interests, and personality; (2) establishment of rapport as evidenced by ease of communication, positive evaluations of each other, satisfaction with the relationship, and validation of self by the other; (3) openness through mutual self-disclosure; (4) anticipation of the role each would play as a marriage partner; (5) adjustment of these roles to fit each other's needs; and (6) dyadic crystallization as evidenced by progressive involvement together, the establishment of boundaries around the relationship, commitment to each other, and emerging identity as a couple.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Religion (Master), vocation (mission), and marriage (mate). See Nancy L. Van Pelt, *The Compleat Courtship: A Young Person's Guide to Dating, Love, and Sex* (Hagerstown, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 24–25.

<sup>48</sup> Balswick and Balswick, *The Family*, 53; Robert A. Lewis, "A Developmental Framework for the Analysis of Premarital Dyadic Formation," *Family Process* 11.1 (March 1972): 17–48.



## Marriage in the Writings of James and Ellen

James White considered marriage a serious responsibility and a great blessing. According to him, it marked “an important era in the lives of men.” He pointed out that the Bible presents a wife that is a “virtuous woman,” a crown to her husband (Prov 12:4), and a “favor of the Lord” (Prov 18:22). James considered the marriage covenant holy and believed it should glorify God. Indifference to this principle was a sign of the end.<sup>49</sup>

Ellen was not in favor of teenagers marrying because they were “poor judge[s] of the fitness of a person” to be their companion for life and were often “controlled by their passions, ... unripe love, immature judgment,” that destroyed “sensible considerations.”<sup>50</sup> Though Ellen was in her later teen years when she married, her early experience and life led her to be especially mature and ready for marriage in her youth; her experience does not contradict the principle of carefully considering one’s choice.

Ellen disapproved of marriages “between the godly and the ungodly,” and the “selection of husband or wife” where “inclination governs,” and not “Christian principles.”<sup>51</sup> She also did not recommend marrying those who had no means of

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<sup>49</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 125; James White, *Sermons on the Coming and Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1870), 62.

<sup>50</sup> Ellen G. White, *An Appeal to Mothers* (1864), 7–8; reprinted in James White, ed., *A Solemn Appeal Relative to Solitary Vice, and the Abuses and Excesses of the Marriage Relation* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1870), 52–53.

<sup>51</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan, as Illustrated in the Lives of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1890), 529 (1958 ed., 563); cf. Ellen G. White, “Noah’s Time and Ours,” *ST*, November 27, 1884, 705–706; Ellen G. White, “Noah’s Time and Ours,” *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, July 1, 1887, 97.

supporting a family. The principle here was not about wealth, but physical, moral, and mental strength to provide for the needs of the wife and the future children.<sup>52</sup>

Scanning the writings of both James and Ellen, we can conclude that they agreed that love that leads to marriage is a principle and must be based in at least five other principles: Christian values, compatibility, maturity, vitality, and responsibility. Though Ellen wrote much more than James on the subject, he appears to have agreed with the principles she discussed.<sup>53</sup>

## Days of Poverty

### First Years of Marriage

The Whites began their married life with scarcity of means and poor in health. As soon as they married, they went to live with Ellen's parents in Gorham, Maine.<sup>54</sup> Though America was opening its doors to the industrial world, it was still not uncommon to see in parts of America an environment that related more to the agricultural and preindustrial world, where extended families provided support and shelter for those newly married.<sup>55</sup>

The newly married Ellen was severely stricken by illness, and many thought she would not survive, but she was miraculously healed. Ellen had been almost constantly ill

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<sup>52</sup> E. W[hite], "The Marriage Relation," in James White, ed., *Solemn Appeal*, 103–104; idem, "Disease and its Causes," *RH*, June 27, 1899, 410; idem, *Selected Messages*, 2:420; cf. 2:481–484.

<sup>53</sup> For a compilation of Ellen's writings on marriage, see Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1980), 43–96.

<sup>54</sup> James White to Stockbridge Howland, March 14, 1847.

<sup>55</sup> Wheeler, *James White*, 43.

since her accident several years before.<sup>56</sup> The Whites had to deal quite often with sickness, and the record shows that during those days they proved to be sources of comfort, care, and help for each other.

### Spirit of Sacrifice

The work of spreading Sabbatarian Adventism began with several difficulties: poverty, feebleness, and an unpopular message. Reflecting on the beginning of the work, James stated, “We entered upon this work penniless, with few friends, and broken in health.” The Sabbatarian group was small, and not many sympathized with their doctrinal views. They had no churches or periodicals to spread the message; therefore, very few people came to their meetings. However, the fact that they had a woman speaker, Ellen, often attracted people to hear her out of curiosity.<sup>57</sup>

In those early days, the Whites gave whatever they had to the growth of the “infant cause.” They wore “poor clothing” and even suffered “for want of proper food” in order to have the means to invest in spreading the Sabbatarian Adventist message.<sup>58</sup> The lack of people and means slowed the promulgation of the message.

The Stockbridge Howland family, from Topsham, Maine, kindly invited the Whites to share their dwelling in October 1847. There, they “commenced housekeeping

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<sup>56</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 239; cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:115.

<sup>57</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 127; cf. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:75.

<sup>58</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “Present and Future,” *RH*, September 23, 1880, 216; cf. idem, “Our Missions,” *RH*, February 5, 1880, 88.

with borrowed furniture.”<sup>59</sup> Ellen had just given birth to her first son, Henry. The Howlands were true friends in this time of extreme need, freely sharing with the Whites whenever they could, but they were also in “close circumstances.”<sup>60</sup> Though the Whites believed their main work was to share the message with others, they never felt comfortable living dependent on others’s means. As the family grew with the newborn baby, James felt compelled to work even harder. “When we have no special work to do in visiting the scattered saints,” James penned, “I feel it my duty to labor with my hands, so as not to be chargeable to others. This is a privilege to me.”<sup>61</sup> Hard work and strict economy were the solutions. Ellen wrote, “We had resolved not to be dependent, but to support ourselves, and have wherewith to help others.”<sup>62</sup>

Ellen recalled that she could afford only “one pint of milk each day” for herself and the newly born child. One day when she had to struggle between buying “milk for three mornings” or clothing for Henry, the young mother decided to “purchased the cloth for an apron to cover the bare arms” of her child. The burden was so big that Ellen was tempted sometimes to ask if God had forsaken them.<sup>63</sup> Ellen recalled that she “fainted to

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<sup>59</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, 105; idem, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:87. Ellen’s sister, Sarah, also lived with them in the same room (Ellen G. White, “Recollections of Early Days of the Message in America,” Ms 76, 1886).

<sup>60</sup> Ellen G. White to Henry White, J. Edson White and William C. White, (Lt 23) September 20, 1859; James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 242.

<sup>61</sup> James White to Elvira Hastings, August 22, 1847.

<sup>62</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 242.

<sup>63</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 242–243.

the floor, with a nursing child” in her “arms more than once for the want of necessary food to eat.”<sup>64</sup>

To make enough money for them to attend their first conference in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, in late April 1848, James left the railroad and went into “the woods to chop cord-wood.” Health impairment added to their struggle. James developed rheumatism in his wrists and was unable to sleep for several nights because of “severe pain.” But the need was greater than the pain, and James had to work “from early morning till dark to earn about fifty cents a day.” Prayers were raised night after night to relieve James from pain and give him enough strength.<sup>65</sup>

The conference was a blessing, and in the late summer of 1848 the Whites were invited to attend meetings in Western New York. The Adventists there were poor and could barely help with travel expenses. At the time, James was once again in poor condition both financially and physically, but determination to go and gather with other believers sent him to the fields. Several years later James pondered,

I was destitute of means, and with feeble health entered the hay-field to earn the sum necessary to bear our expenses to that meeting. I took a large job of mowing, and when fainting beneath the noonday sun, I would bow before God in my swath, call upon him for strength, rise refreshed, and mow on again. In five weeks I earned enough to bear our expenses to the conference.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ellen G. White, “European General Council,” Ms 19, 1885.

<sup>65</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 242; cf. Ellen G. White, “Talk before the European Council,” Ms 14, 188; cf. idem, “European General Council,” Ms 19, 1885; [James White], “Eastern Tour,” *RH*, September 29, 1863, 140.

<sup>66</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 274; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:94.

James survived and regained enough strength to move on. His health also seemed to improve. “My health is good,” he wrote, “God gives me strength to labor hard all day. I have mowed eight days right off and felt hardly a pain.”<sup>67</sup>

In November 1848, Ellen approached her husband with a message sent by a vision that they needed to publish a regular periodical. Poverty, feebleness, and adverse circumstances postponed the work until the summer of the next year.<sup>68</sup>

In 1849, the Whites launched the *Present Truth*, had their second son, James Edson, and were cordially invited to live with Albert Belden’s family in Rocky Hill, Connecticut.<sup>69</sup> After living for a while in a rented house in Oswego, New York, with borrowed furniture, the Whites moved in August 1850 to the home of Brother Harris at Port Byron, New York. In late 1850 they moved to Paris, Maine, where they spent seven months in the house of Edward Andrews (up to June 1851). There they passed through many privations, but were “willing to live cheaply” so that the publications might be sustained.<sup>70</sup>

The Whites went west again and resided for a few weeks at the home of Jesse Thompson near Ballston Spa, New York;<sup>71</sup> then they stayed in the nearby city of

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<sup>67</sup> James White to Stockbridge Howland, July 2, 1848; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:139.

<sup>68</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, 125–126.

<sup>69</sup> Ellen G. White to Leonard and Elvira Hastings, (Lt 5) April 21, 1849; Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, 123–127.

<sup>70</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 265, 278. James added, “The brethren in this State are generally poor. None in this vicinity own a foot of land, a house, or even a horse” ([James] W[hite], “The Paper,” *RH*, March 1851, 53; cf. [James White], “Publications,” *RH*, March 1851, 53–54).

<sup>71</sup> Ellen G. White to Leonard Hastings and Harriet Hastings, (Lt 7) July 27, 1851; cf. Ellen G. White to Harriet Hastings, (Lt 3), August 11, 1851.

Saratoga Springs for nine months (July 1851–March 1852). Once again they rented a house and “with borrowed household stuff began housekeeping.”<sup>72</sup> In Saratoga the Whites enjoyed the presence of their two-year old son, Edson, and his babysitter Clarissa Bonfoey. The house afforded room for others, so Ellen’s sister Sarah Harmon and her fiancé, Stephen Belden, came to live with them. Later, Annie Smith joined the team and became a very efficient helper in the publishing work.<sup>73</sup>

According to James, up to that time they “had no permanent home, but had traveled as the way opened, then stopped to write and publish where brethren made us welcome.”<sup>74</sup> In Saratoga, they had the rare privilege of living in a rented place for a longer time and having one of their boys with them.

In the early spring of 1852, the Whites moved with their publishing team and office to Rochester, New York. There, for the first time, the Whites had their own furniture. Up to that time they had lived with borrowed furniture; their own things could fit in a small trunk.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Wheeler, *James White*, 66; cf. Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, 141.

<sup>73</sup> Sarah and Stephen were married on August 5, 1851, and Stephen’s mechanical talents proved to be very helpful to James in his publishing projects (William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: XII—Removal to Saratoga Springs,” *RH*, May 23, 1935, 9–10; V. Robinson, *James White*, 76). Though Annie had a short life, she was a great help to the Whites in Saratoga and later in Rochester. For more on Annie, see *SDA Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Smith, Annie Rebekah”; Ronald D. Graybill, “Annie Smith: A Look at Her Life and Poetry,” *Adventist Heritage* 2 (Summer 1975):14–23. Ron Graybill, “Annie Smith, Her Life and Love,” *RH*, April 1, 1976, 4–7; Norma J. Collins, *Heartwarming Stories of Adventist Pioneers: You Will See Your Lord a-Coming*, book 1 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 167–176.

<sup>74</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 293.

<sup>75</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 244; James White to Leonard and Elvira Hastings, April 27, 1848. Both James and Ellen mentioned their possessions fitting into a small trunk in the late 1840s, and evidence suggests that their situation had not changed much in the early 1850s.

In Rochester they “rented an old house for \$175 a year.” It accommodated, besides the White family (husband, wife, and three boys; a third son was born in 1854), two household helpers, and the staff connected with the publishing office.<sup>76</sup> Ellen calculated that all together their “family numbered from fifteen to twenty.”<sup>77</sup> The Whites’s home also became the editorial office, print shop, and bindery, housing the press and the office, which meant saving about \$50 a year.<sup>78</sup> Economy was important and at the time necessary, but it was definitely “attended with many inconveniences to all concerned.”<sup>79</sup> James was in “very poor health,” and “almost destitute of means,” but he was satisfied with the progress of the cause.<sup>80</sup>

Commenting on their new furniture and diet, Ellen penned,

You would smile could you look in upon us and see our furniture. We have bought two old bedsteads for 25 cents each. My husband brought me home six old chairs, no two of them alike, for which he paid \$1, and soon he presented me with four more old chairs without any seating, for which he paid 62 cents for the lot. The frames were strong, and I have been seating them with drilling. Butter is so high we do not purchase it, neither can we afford potatoes. Our first meals were taken on a fireboard placed upon two empty flour barrels. We are willing to endure privations if the work of God can be advanced. We believe the Lord’s hand was in our coming to this place.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White, XIV—Beginnings in Rochester,” *RH*, June 13, 1935, 9–11.

<sup>77</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 309.

<sup>78</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 287.

<sup>79</sup> Pub. Com., “Affairs Connected with the Office,” *RH*, December 26, 1854, 150.

<sup>80</sup> [James White], “Close of the Volume,” *RH*, May 12, 1853, 204.

<sup>81</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 287. Willie White said that Ellen used to follow the plow to pick up potatoes, and that beans were part of the regular diet (William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White, XIV—Beginnings in Rochester,” *RH*, June 13, 1935, 10). Potatoes and beans were the food of the working class, and though they were considered articles of good nourishment, “there was still a social stigma against the beans.” Beans were “the cheapest form of protein available” in nineteenth-century America, and their use “proliferate[d] most in periods of economic depression” (Ken Albala, *Beans: A History* [New York, NY: Berg, 2007], 166–167). Ellen later wrote,



By October 1852, they moved into another address in Rochester, and “for want of room” it was necessary to move the press to a rented office building.<sup>82</sup> Their last days in Rochester were blessed with the birth of another boy, but also mixed with sickness, deaths among their extended family and close friends, and accusations.

In early 1855, James clearly described his situation. First, he recognized the effort and dedication of those involved in the *Review* Office. They basically “toiled for no more than food and clothing,” and their deprivations and “toils were not small.” James then focused on his reality, “Without capital, and without health, we cannot much longer bear the burden.” His burden included “the care of a large family,” the publications, traveling, and laboring in the churches. He was working about “14 to 18” hours per day, and “this amount of care and labor, . . . protracted sickness and deaths” in his family,” brought James “very near the grave.” He then proposed following a new lifestyle, which included “proper rest from care, and exercise in the open air” and “to be free from the care of a large family.” To resolve this latter proposal, he decided that the office must pay more wages for the workers so they could “pay the usual prices of board elsewhere.”<sup>83</sup> Another

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“[W]hen we lived there [Rochester] we did not eat nourishing food as we should, and disease nearly carried us to the grave. . . . The motive we had was pure. It was to save means, that the paper might be sustained. We were poor. I saw that the fault then was in the church. [If] Those who had means had done their part, the burden upon us would have been lightened. . . . I saw that God does not require anyone to take a course of such rigid economy as to weaken or injure the temple of God” (Ellen G. White, *Testimony* no. 5 [1859], in *idem*, *Testimonies*, 1:205).

<sup>82</sup> [James White], “The Review and Herald,” *RH*, October 14, 1852, 96.

<sup>83</sup> [James White], “The Office,” *RH*, February 20, 1855, 182–183.

door was opened to the family in the late fall of 1855, and they and the *Review* office moved to Battle Creek, Michigan.<sup>84</sup>

### Faithful through the Tests

James and Ellen faced difficult days in the beginning of their marriage. Lack of means, hard work, several illnesses, and a nomadic life all challenged them. The evidence shows, however, that instead of shaking their relationship, these factors brought them closer and into more sympathy with each other.

There were times of discouragement and suffering, but as they passed through these, both their relationship with each other and their link to the Sabbatarian cause were strengthened. James said it bluntly: “Industry and economy have been our strength in laboring to build up the cause in the days of our poverty, and the poverty of the cause.”<sup>85</sup> They had a conviction that God had called them in their scarcity, and the affliction they experienced served as an example to future workers in the same cause. Looking back several years later, James summarized, “Trained in the school of rigid economy, we learned the value of money.” It was as if “God had a design in choosing us in our poverty and humility, to not only have a care for the temporal interests of the cause as well as the spiritual, but to make us an example of industry and economy for others.” Several times, the Whites deprived themselves of “even the necessaries of life to save money for the cause of God” and accomplish the most they could.<sup>86</sup> Owning almost nothing in goods

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<sup>84</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:96–97.

<sup>85</sup> James White, “Present and Future,” *RH*, September 23, 1880, 216.

<sup>86</sup> James White, “Our Missions,” *RH*, February 5, 1880, 88; James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 129.

did not distract them from their ministry. On the contrary, they “enjoyed peace of mind and a clear conscience,” and this they “prized above earthly comforts.”<sup>87</sup>

The relationship of the Whites improved as they were always encouraging each other and spending long seasons in prayer.<sup>88</sup> When a depressed James said, “Wife it is of no use to try to struggle on any longer,” his wife was there to encourage him.<sup>89</sup> When Ellen questioned the caring of God, James was there to utter, “Hush, the Lord has not forsaken us. He gives us enough for our present wants. Jesus fared no better.”<sup>90</sup> A recent study has pointed out that “Qualities such as fondness, admiration, and awareness seem to act as buffers in protecting the relationship during stressful changes.”<sup>91</sup> Though their faith was several times “tried to the uttermost,”<sup>92</sup> their relationship was consolidated by their union in purpose and mission and their care for each other, communicated in encouraging words and expressions of hope.

### Doctrinal Issues

James and Ellen were part of the Millerite movement of the 1840s. The Millerites held the interpretation of biblical prophecies in high regard and upheld the literal, visible, pre-millennial Second Coming of Jesus, but Miller and his main helpers had no interest in

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<sup>87</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 242–244.

<sup>88</sup> See for example James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 242, 272, 314.

<sup>89</sup> *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 281; cf. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:87–90.

<sup>90</sup> Ellen G. White, “European General Council,” Ms 19, 1885; cf. Ellen G. White, “Talk before the European Council,” Ms 14, 1885.

<sup>91</sup> Janice Driver, Amber Tabares, Alyson F. Shapiro, and John M. Gottman, “Couple Interaction in Happy and Unhappy Marriages: Gottman Laboratory Studies,” in *Normal Family Processes: Growing Diversity and Complexity*, ed. Froma Walsh, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2016), 74.

<sup>92</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 281.

distinctive doctrines such as the seventh-day Sabbath, conditional immortality, etc; the proximity of the Coming of Jesus prevented them from incorporating other doctrines into their beliefs. However, after the Disappointment of the fall of 1844, a small group of believers began uniting their voices and thoughts regarding biblical doctrines that according to them needed to be restored before the imminent end of the world.

Ellen began sharing the visions she received in the end of 1844 and beginning of 1845. She initiated her ministry by speaking in Portland and nearby cities, and those who “had full confidence that it was from God” were saved from the fanaticism<sup>93</sup> and rejection of the prophetic historicist hermeneutic that later plagued several Millerite leaders.<sup>94</sup> Ellen’s visions mostly presented nothing new, but were a source to strengthen “faith and avoid error.”<sup>95</sup> It is interesting to note that visions at that time were not well

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<sup>93</sup> For the purpose of this research, the definition of *fanaticism* will follow the Whites’s own. The kind of fanaticism they had to combat came from those involved in the Millerite movement who, after the Great Disappointment, were attracted to unbiblical doctrines, such as that “resurrection of the righteous dead had already taken place[,] ... declared that they were perfected, that body, soul, and spirit were holy[,] ... their flesh was purified, they were ready for translation[,] ... and thought that [their] sanctified flesh could not sin” (Ellen G. White, “Regarding the Late Movement in Indiana,” article read by Mrs. E. G. White before the Ministers, April 17, 1901, *GCB*, April 23, 1901, 420; cf. Ellen G. White, “Notes of Travel: The Cause in Vermont,” *RH*, November 20, 1883, 721–722—uses the words “heresies and delusions”; cf. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:49–74). James Nix adds, “from Ellen’s perspective ‘fanaticism’ would have included not working, creeping and crawling, undue familiarity between men and women, mesmerism, mixed foot washing between men and women, foot kissing, false visionaries, touching hot stoves to prove you would not be burned, etc.” (James R. Nix, “Another Look at Israel Damman,” A talk given during the Ellen G. White Summit held at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia, February 2–5, 2004, 8, CAR-AU).

<sup>94</sup> See Arthur, “Come Out of Babylon,” 84–371; Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 283–290; Moon, “Josiah Litch,” 29–32.

<sup>95</sup> Robert Haddock, “A History of the Doctrine of the Sanctuary in the Advent Movement, 1800–1905” (BD Thesis, Andrews University, 1970), 147. Since the beginning Ellen White believed that “the visions [were] the way God had chosen to teach in some cases, those who erred from Bible truth” (Ellen G. White, “To Those Who Are Receiving the Seal of the Living God,” Topsham, ME: [James and Ellen White], January 31, 1849). James always argued that Adventist doctrines were “founded upon the Scriptures as their only basis” and “were brought out from the Scriptures before Mrs. White had any view in regard to them.” (J[ames] W[hite], “A Test,” *RH*, October 16, 1855, 61). He agreed with Ellen, declaring, “But if you err from Bible truth, and are in danger of being lost, it may be that God will in the

accepted, since there were several people claiming to have visions and major Millerite leaders rejected any kind of new visions or dreams.<sup>96</sup>

### James on the Visions

Evidence indicates that in their early years of interaction, James never doubted Ellen's calling. He had a conviction that Ellen's visions were "supernatural and not merely religious excitement."<sup>97</sup> In September 1845, a letter from James was published in the *Day-Star*, presenting Ellen, as "one Sister in Maine who has had a clear vision of the Advent people traveling to the City of God." In the short letter, James exposed the danger of counterfeit manifestation, and claimed that the real and true must be grounded "on the truths of the Bible" and judged "by their fruits." Moreover, God's children must be led by

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time of his choice correct you [by a vision] and bring you back to the Bible, and save you" (James White, "Time to Commence the Sabbath," *RH*, February 25, 1868, 168).

<sup>96</sup> During her life and ministry Ellen White always preferred to be recognized as "a messenger of God" (Ellen G. White to John H. Kellogg, [Lt 320] November 21, 1905; cf. Ellen G. White, "A Messenger," *RH*, July 26, 1906, 8; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 170). She also did not claim to be a prophet because "many who boldly claim that they are prophets are a reproach to the cause of Christ; and because my work includes much more than the word 'prophet' signifies." She, nevertheless, did not have "controversy" with those who called her as such (Ellen G. White, "A Messenger," *RH*, July 26, 1906, 8; idem, *Selected Messages*, 1:32, 34–35). The Albany Conference which was held in the spring of 1845 was called to react against the fanaticism that was spreading among Millerism which included visionary experiences (see *Proceedings of the Mutual Conference of Adventists: Held in the City of Albany, the 29<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, and 1<sup>st</sup> of May, 1845* [New York, NY: Joshua V. Himes, 1845]). Another conference held in New York in May 1845, declared, "We have no confidence in any new messages, visions, dreams, tongues, miracles, extraordinary gifts, revelations, impressions, discerning of spirits, or teachings, &c, &c, not in accordance with the unadulterated word of God" ("Conference of Adventists at New York," *The Morning Watch*, May 15, 1845, 158). This resolution just confirmed what had been the position of the Millerite leaders before the Great Disappointment (see Tabernacle Committee, "To the Public," *ST* [Millerite], May 10, 1843, 74–75; "Declaration of Principles," *ST* [Millerite], June 7, 1843, 107; "Declaration of Principles," June 15, 1843, 112; "Address to the Conference," *Advent Herald*, June 5, 1844, 141; Burt, "Historical Background," 12–13, 16–18; Theodore N. Levterov, "The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844–1889" [PhD diss., Andrews University, 2011], 37–38).

<sup>97</sup> Burt, "Historical Background," 319. Before their marriage, James had seen that Ellen's "wonderful experience and work was of God," (James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, [1880, 1888], 238). He fervently believed that God had chosen Ellen "as a channel of light and truth to the people in a special sense" (James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* [1880, 1888], 126).

faith and a “love from heaven” that “never steps out of the path of truth,” instead of following “*impressions* alone.”<sup>98</sup> He always affirmed that the Bible was a complete rule of faith and practice, but it did not forbid God from revealing His will through dreams and visions. James argued, “True visions are given to lead us to God, and his written word; but those that are given for a new rule of faith and practice, separate from the Bible, cannot be from God, and should be rejected.”<sup>99</sup>

James clearly pointed out that visions were predicted for the last days, but that they needed to be in accordance with the Bible. He also engaged in refuting those who taught doctrines contrary to what the Whites believed, but used the writings of Ellen to corroborate their opinions. This caused problems for Ellen, and the Whites worked to clarify these issues.<sup>100</sup>

Whenever he had a chance, James reinforced the credibility and veracity of Ellen’s prophetic gift—not because he was her husband or had other personal interests, but because he had been convinced of it through biblical study, the reliability of the message, and physical evidence.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> James White, “Letter from Bro. White,” *Day-Star*, September 6, 1845, 17–18 (italics in the original).

<sup>99</sup> [James White], n.t., *WLF*, 13–14; cf. G. W. Holt and James White, “Dreams,” *RH*, January 13, 1852, 80; J[ames] W[hite], “Our Tour West,” *RH*, February 3, 1852, 86–87.

<sup>100</sup> See for example, Ellen G. White, “The Remnant Church Not Babylon,” *RH*, September 12, 1893, 578–579; idem, “To Bro. Eli Curtis,” *WLF*, 11–12).

<sup>101</sup> James encouraged others to examine Ellen closely while she was in a vision (see Loughborough, *Rise and Progress*, 97–98; idem, *The Great Second Advent Movement*, 207, 211, 318–319; idem, “The Study of the Testimonies,” *GCB*, January 31, 1893, 58–61). For descriptions of her physical condition while in a vision, see James White, *Life Incidents*, 272; Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement*, 204–211; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:128–130.

The fact that James did not doubt the visions does not mean he understood all messages. In 1873, James penned a document exalting the blessing of the gift of prophecy and also used the pamphlet to confess his attitudes toward the visions. He clearly stated that he “never doubted the visions of Mrs. White.” Nevertheless, commenting on his first ten years of interaction with Ellen and the visions, he later explained,

If a trial or temptation had for a moment come over my mind, as I did not, and could not, understand all, I at once fell back upon the vast amount of clear evidence in their favor, and there rested until all was made clear. But this statement applies more particularly to the first ten years of my experience relative to the visions, when many things were shown of the future history of the cause which time alone could explain.<sup>102</sup>

#### Date-Setting

Probably the first discrepancy between James’s and Ellen’s beliefs was regarding the time of the Second Coming in the fall of 1845. Just after October 1844, another wave of setting dates occurred. Some expected it in the spring of 1845, and the passing of that time was another hard blow to them.<sup>103</sup> Others extended it to the fall of 1845; among them was James.<sup>104</sup> Just a few days before the time, Ellen had a vision and was presented to her that “the saints must pass through the ‘time of Jacob’s trouble,’ which was future.” Therefore, Jesus would not come in the fall of 1845, and those expecting it would be disappointed. James accepted the revelation and was saved from another painful

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<sup>102</sup> James White, *A Solemn Appeal to the Ministry*, 5.

<sup>103</sup> Burt, “Historical Background,” 86–103.

<sup>104</sup> James White, “Watchman, What of the Night!”, *Day-Star*, September 20, 1845, 25–26; cf. Joseph Bates, “Midnight Cry in the Past,” *RH*, December 1850, 23.

disappointment.<sup>105</sup> Thus the Whites united their efforts and worked together to combat the waves of promoting “definite time” among some Adventists.<sup>106</sup>

## Fanaticism

Fanaticism was everywhere and both James and Ellen labored to suppress it.<sup>107</sup> Many who went to fanatical extremes were sincere people who were just accepting errors while still confused about their former experiences. Others in the group were the only ones who gave any prophetic relevance to the date in the fall of 1844. These factors initially led the Whites to minister to them. This interaction with “the more radical edge of Adventism” ended up bringing them “much unwanted notoriety,”<sup>108</sup> as some

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<sup>105</sup> [James White], n.t., *WLF*, 22.

<sup>106</sup> Ellen G. White, “Dear Brethren and Sisters,” *Present Truth*, November 1850, 86–87; Bates, *An Explanation of the Typical and Anti-Typical Sanctuary, by the Scriptures. With a Chart* (New Bedford, [MA]: Benjamin Lindsey, 1850), 10–11; Ellen G. White, “Dear Brethren,” *RH Extra*, July 21, 1851, [4]; [James White], “Our Present Work,” *RH*, August 19, 1851, 12–13; [idem], “The Cause,” *RH*, October 24, 1854, 84; [James White], “Our Last Paper,” *RH*, October 24, 1854, 88; cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:207–210; George R. Knight, *Joseph Bates: The Real Founder of Seventh-day Adventism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 156–157.

<sup>107</sup> See for example, Ellen G. White to John N. Loughborough, (Lt 2) August 24, 1874; “Early Experiences in Meeting Fanaticism,” Ms 9, 1859; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:70–105.

<sup>108</sup> Burt, “Historical Background,” 128. One episode that negatively affected their image in the eyes of some was the trial of Israel Dammon. For good descriptions and analysis of the facts involved with Dammon’s trial see, Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:40–42; idem, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 95–97; Burt, “Historical Background,” 131–140; Frederick Hoyt, ed., “Trial of Elder I. Dammon: Reported for the *Piscataquis Farmer*,” *Spectrum* 17.5 (Aug. 1987): 29–36; reprinted in [idem], “The Disappointment Experienced: The Trial of Elder I. Dammon,” Appendix 2, in *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, rev. ed. (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 227–240; Rennie Schoepflin, ed., “Scandal or Rite of Passage? Historians on the Dammon Trial,” *Spectrum* 17.5 (Aug. 1987): 37–50; Bruce Weaver, “Incident in Atkinson: The Arrest and Trial of Israel Dammon,” *Adventist Currents* 3 (April 1988): 16–35; Nix, “Another Look at Israel Damman,” Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 473–475; cf. Israel Dammon, “Letter from Bro. Dammon,” *Jubilee Standard*, June 5, 1845, 104. Dammon later became involved in fanatical experiences and accepted non-biblical doctrines, such as that the resurrection of the dead had already happened. Ellen and James combated his attitudes and beliefs and ended up distancing themselves from him (Ellen G. White to John N. Loughborough, (Lt 2) August 24, 1874; *Defense of Elder James White and Wife*, 109–111; Loughborough, *Rise and Progress*, 130–131).



associated James and Ellen with the fanatical extremists.<sup>109</sup> It was only later in 1845 that Ellen began to combat fanaticism more vigorously.<sup>110</sup> While James and Ellen's confrontations with fanaticism were fiery and distressing, these experiences served to give the couple independence and autonomy and differentiate them from the extremists, especially concerning doctrinal beliefs.<sup>111</sup>

### Seventh-day Sabbath

In the fall of 1846, the Whites accepted the law of God, the Ten Commandments, as still valid, including the observance of the seventh day as holy. It became part of their message, which they actively preached by voice and pen.<sup>112</sup> The new doctrine "was strongly opposed by the leading advent papers, and the preachers of the advent, with very few exceptions," leading many of the earlier embracers of the Sabbath to give it up in the midst of "confusion of views." The Whites, nevertheless, belonged to the few who "stood firm, and toiled on amid cruel opposition and reproach from those who professed the

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<sup>109</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 72; idem, *Early Writings*, 22, 77; cf. Burt, "Historical Background," 128ff. Ellen was accused of being part of fanatical exercises, such as creeping, but she defended herself by declaring that her only part in this was "to bear a testimony decidedly against it," which set many against her. Since these extreme acts were seen by some as evidence of humility, and Ellen not only refused to take part in them but also rebuked these "fanatical man-made tests" that were bringing "a reproach upon the cause of God," Ellen was "accused of being proud and like the world, shunning the cross, not willing to humble" herself (Ellen G. White to John N. Loughborough, [Lt 2] August 24, 1874).

<sup>110</sup> Nix, "Another Look at Israel Damman," 9; cf. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 474; Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches Manuscript*, 126–127.

<sup>111</sup> Burt, "Historical Background," 141.

<sup>112</sup> They were greatly influenced toward this by Joseph Bates's pamphlet, *The Seventh Day Sabbath: A Perpetual Sign from the Beginning to the Entering into the Gates of the Holy City According to the Commandment* (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1846); James White, *Life Incidents*, 269.

advent faith.”<sup>113</sup> The Sabbatarians thus began to differentiate themselves through the acceptance of a corpus of distinctive doctrines.<sup>114</sup>

The acceptance of distinctive doctrines, especially the seventh-day Sabbath, which were not held by James and Ellen’s parents and relatives (their parents and some of their siblings united with the Sabbatarians later on) indicates a high sense of independence of their respective families, following the biblical mandate of “leave and cleave” (Gen 2:24 KJV). As pointed out by Jack and Judith Balswick, when a couple initiates a marital relationship they have to adjust to several things, including “making decisions about church involvement and spiritual growth.” Though encouragement and support from their families in this initial phase of a marriage is important, if “the families interfere, the foundation will be weakened.”<sup>115</sup> The Whites learned from their parents’s commitment to the Bible and willingness to stand for their beliefs,<sup>116</sup> but were independent in their search for truth, and as a couple were united in their decision to follow their biblical convictions.

#### Sabbatarian Adventist Conferences (1848–1850)

During 1846 and 1847, the basic message of Sabbatarian Adventism was clarified and the Whites and Bates became its main leaders. Bates introduced seminal ideas such

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<sup>113</sup> [James White], “A Brief Sketch of the Past,” *RH*, May 6, 1852, 5; cf. [Ellen G. White], “Recollections of Early Days of the Message in America,” Ms 76, 1886.

<sup>114</sup> At this time about fifty people observed the seventh-day Sabbath in the northeast United States (James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* [1880, 1888], 128; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:77; idem, “Search the Scriptures,” *RH*, July 26, 1892, 465–466).

<sup>115</sup> Balswick and Balswick, *The Family*, 33.

<sup>116</sup> See ch. 3.

as the eschatological significance of the seventh-day Sabbath and its correlation with the heavenly sanctuary and the third angel's message;<sup>117</sup> Ellen's visions united the movement in their mission and clarified and corrected some doctrinal interpretations; and James became the administrator, as he initiated the main publication efforts and promoted the advancement of the cause.

Sabbatarian Adventists began to gather in general conferences in different places during the years 1848–1850. When they met together, they discussed their biblical insights, adjusted their beliefs according to the Bible, and shared their message with non-believers.<sup>118</sup> This was the first general attempt to bring together believers in the same message and make effective plans for the spreading of the doctrines. Though they were few in number and mostly poor, James considered that “in point of numbers and influence, it marked a new era in the cause.”<sup>119</sup> These conferences established the leadership of the Whites among Sabbatarian Adventists.

In August 1848, about thirty-five believers gathered at a particular meeting in Volney, New York, and the account says, “There were hardly two agreed.” James pointed out that a “confusion of sentiment” and “a spirit of discussion and contention for points not important” characterized the meeting.<sup>120</sup> The Whites, seeing the divergence and the lack of biblical foundation for the presented views, firmly told the group that they “had not come so great a distance to hear them, but had come to teach them the truth.” They

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<sup>117</sup> Andrews, *History of the Sabbath*, 508; Knight, *Joseph Bates*, 79, 108–118.

<sup>118</sup> James White wrote, “We do not wish to shut out any new truth” (James White to Leonard and Elvira Hastings, October 2, 1848).

<sup>119</sup> James White, *Life Incidents*, 270–271.

<sup>120</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:97; James White, *Life Incidents*, 274.

showed the group, through biblical arguments and a vision pointing out biblical texts to correct them, that some beliefs “which they claimed to be according to the Bible, were only according to their opinion of the Bible.” Biblical evidence and an effort for unity closed the meeting “victoriously,” where “truth gained the victory.”<sup>121</sup> James considered this meeting to be the beginning of “the work of uniting the brethren on the great truths connected with the message of the third angel.” It also resulted in the conversion and baptism of unbelievers.<sup>122</sup>

This period brought unity among the Sabbatarian Adventists and grounded them in major doctrines: “the imminent, personal, premillennial second advent;” “the major prophetic outlines and time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation—including the cleansing of the sanctuary in 1844;” “the conditional immortality of man;” “the seventh-day Sabbath;” “the heavenly sanctuary and the twofold ministry of Christ;” “the Spirit of prophecy;” and “the specifications and involvement of the third angel’s message.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:97–99; James White, *Life Incidents*, 274; James White to Leonard and Elvira Hastings, August 26, 1848. Loughborough, who was not present at the meeting but interviewed some who were, stated, “The reason these persons gave up their differences was not simply because Sr. White said they must give them up, but because in the same vision they were pointed to plain statements of Scripture that refuted their false theories, and had presented before them in contrast a straight and harmonious track of Bible truth” (Loughborough, “Recollections of the Past—No. 12,” *RH*, March 3, 1885, 138; cf. *idem*, *Rise and Progress*, 138).

<sup>122</sup> [James White], “A Brief Sketch of the Past,” *RH*, May 6, 1852, 5; Loughborough, *Rise and Progress*, 136–137.

<sup>123</sup> Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, 4:1030–1031; for a brief explanation of these major doctrines, see *idem*, 4:1031–1048; cf. Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 66–67; George R. Knight, *Anticipating the Advent: A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993), 33–37, 41–43; Godfrey T. Anderson, “Sectarianism and Organization, 1846–1864,” in *Adventism in America: A History*, ed. Gary Land, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 33; Ellen G. White, “Standing by the Landmarks,” Ms 13, 1889.

## Teamwork Ministry

Their search for understanding of biblical doctrines had united the Whites and strengthened their relationship since they first met. As they studied the biblical issues, they were united in their interpretation. It bonded them as a team while they went from place to place to teach and correct others.

It is noteworthy that James always defended the position that the distinctive Sabbatarian doctrines were discovered after a long and earnest Bible study and not through the visions.<sup>124</sup> His position was in agreement with Ellen's understanding of her ministry: she believed the same. However, she became more vocal about the purpose and function of the visions later in her life.<sup>125</sup> During the first years of her ministry, James was more active than Ellen in sharing the benefits of the gift of prophecy and defending its right purpose and use.

The Whites formed a very efficient and functional ministerial team. They had confidence in each other and focused on the same goal. James was an ordained minister, and Ellen trusted in him when she decided to be rebaptized. Despite their lack of affiliation with any denominational organization, Ellen confirmed her acceptance of James's authority as an ordained minister of the gospel.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> J. W[hite], "A Test," *RH*, October 16, 1855, 61–62; idem, "Time to Commence the Sabbath," *RH*, February 25, 1868, 168.

<sup>125</sup> See for example, Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:665; 2:606; 5:664–671. For a summarized exposition of the subject in Ellen White's writings see, Denton Edward Rebok, *Believe His Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1956), 203–210.

<sup>126</sup> There is no mention of the exact date, but Arthur White connects it with the time when she accepted the Sabbath and fully embraced the third angel's message (Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*,

The importance, relevance, and urgency of the message led James and Ellen to place preaching and exhortation at the center of their ministry. Their preaching itinerary included discourses from both of them, and they arranged the meetings so that both were active participants. Usually James “would give a doctrinal discourse,” and then Ellen “would follow with an exhortation.” They considered their work important, but they humbly recognized that God was the One responsible for the increase of the cause.<sup>127</sup>

## Publishing Work

### Beginning of Independent Publications

Publishing was an important tool used by religious movements in nineteenth-century America. In a society that lived in the ferment of a great religious awakening, journals and newspapers of a religious nature were common, and they were enthusiastically read in the northeastern United States.<sup>128</sup>

Ellen’s visions brought theological insights that were considered vital for the unity, comfort, and strength of the disappointed Millerites. Health impairment and lack of editorial assistance were probably the reasons why Ellen’s first vision of December 1844 was not published until more than a year later. The first time her visions appeared in

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1:121–122). The only reference to Ellen’s baptism is from James in 1868, referring to “an early period of her experience” (James White, *Life Incidents*, 273).

<sup>127</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 127–128; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:75.

<sup>128</sup> Handy, “The Protestant Quest,” 51; Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 103–109.

printed form was in 1846 in a Millerite paper.<sup>129</sup> James had a major influence on this phase of Ellen's life. He promoted her visions by being her publisher and editor.<sup>130</sup>

As the Sabbatarian Adventists gained more biblical understanding, they began publishing their views and sending them out to other Millerites. Initially (1845–1846), James and Ellen sent material to be published in the *Day-Star*, a Bridegroom Adventist periodical. When Enoch Jacobs, editor of the *Day-Star*, moved into Shakerism in early 1846, it left Bridegroom Adventists “without a regular paper to express their views.”<sup>131</sup> After that, James White and Joseph Bates published Ellen's visions in broadsides.<sup>132</sup> Bates also published some booklets to spread the Sabbath news.<sup>133</sup> Joining their efforts

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<sup>129</sup> Despite the importance of the message within the vision, Ellen was initially able to present it only orally; in her physical condition, she “was unable to hold [her] pen steadily” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:73). The earliest known published reference to the vision is in a letter written by James White to the *Day-Star* (James White, “Letter from Bro. White,” *Day-Star*, September 6, 1845, 17–18). Four months later, Ellen sent a letter relating her visions to the editor of the *Day-Star*, Enoch Jacobs. Despite her note that it was not intended for publication, Jacobs published it (Ellen G. Harmon, “A Letter from Sister Harmon,” *Day-Star*, January 24, 1846, 31–32). It should also be noted that the letter to Jacobs described two visions, though they were not mentioned separately: the “midnight cry” vision (December 1844) and the “Vision of the New Earth” (Spring 1845). These two visions continued to be reprinted together for several years. It was only with “the issuance of the more definitive biographical work” of Ellen White in 1860, that they were differentiated as two distinct views (Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* [1860], 2:30–35, 52–55; also idem, *Testimonies* [1885], 1:58–61, 67–70). See Arthur L. White, “Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question: A Review of the Experience of Early Seventh-day Adventist Believers in its Historical Context,” revised May 9, 1982 (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1982), 16–18nt6, 27nt8; and Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, 297.

<sup>130</sup> The editorial work included “correcting grammatical errors, and eliminating needless repetition,” but never changing or influencing the message (Ellen G. White, *The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies to the Church* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913; original from 1906], 4).

<sup>131</sup> Burt, “Historical Background,” 237; George R. Knight, “Historical Introduction,” in *Earliest Seventh-day Adventist Periodicals*, ed. George R. Knight (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2005), xiv.

<sup>132</sup> Ellen G. Harmon, *To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad* (Portland, [ME: James White], April 6, 1846), 250 copies (reprinting of Ellen G. Harmon, “Letter from Sister Harmon,” *Day-Star*, January 24, 1846, 31–32; and “Letter from Sister Harmon,” *Day-Star*, March 14, 1846, 7–8); Ellen G. White, “Dear Bro. Bates,” in *A Vision* (Fairhaven, MA: Joseph Bates, April 7, 1847; repr. in *WLF*, 18–21).

<sup>133</sup> Bates, *The Seventh Day Sabbath* (1846); Bates, *The Seventh Day Sabbath*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev. and enl. (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1847); Bates, *The Opening Heavens, Or a Connected View of the*

toward the same goal, the spread of Sabbatarian Adventism, they published the first joint publication of the three Sabbatarian leaders, *A Word to the "Little Flock,"* in May 1847.<sup>134</sup> This was James's "first major publishing accomplishment," and "represented the joint ministry of both James and Ellen."<sup>135</sup> As Burt points out, the little pamphlet was the turning point for the movement. "It linked the key leaders," and "outlined the theological foundation for their evangelistic outreach to other Adventists."<sup>136</sup>

#### "A Little Paper"

In a general meeting in Dorchester, Massachusetts in November 1848, Ellen White received a vision that redefined the view of the Sabbatarian Adventists regarding their mission. This vision's message was that they should publish their views more extensively and share them more abundantly. According to Bates, Ellen said while in vision, "Publish the things thou hast seen and heard, and the blessing of God will attend."<sup>137</sup> As soon as Ellen came out of her vision, she said to James,

I have a message for you. You must begin to print a little paper and send it out to the people. Let it be small at first; but as the people read, they will send you means with which to print, and it will be a success from the first. From this small beginning

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*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]: Press of Benjamin Lindsey, 1846).

<sup>134</sup> The twenty-four-page pamphlet contained articles that had been prepared to be sent to Crosier's periodical, the *Day-Dawn*. When the *Day-Dawn* "closed up in April 1847," it "forced James White into his own publishing venture" (Knight, "Historical Introduction," xiv) to share "those things which will very soon take place on this earth" (James White, introductory note in *WLF*, 1).

<sup>135</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:127.

<sup>136</sup> Burt, "Historical Background," 325.

<sup>137</sup> Bates, *A Seal of the Living God: A Hundred Forty-four Thousand, of the Servants of God Being Sealed, in 1849* (New Bedford, [MA]: Press of Benjamin Lindsey, 1849), 26. The Sabbatarians had already spent some time discussing enlarging their publishing affairs (Bates, *A Seal of the Living God*, 24).



it was shown to me to be like streams of light that went clear round the world.<sup>138</sup>

Although this was a clear message carrying a promise, other circumstances such as poverty, physical infirmities, lack of time, and probably lack of faith<sup>139</sup> led James to more discouragement than excitement. These factors impeded a prompt action to implement the mandate. The urgency of sharing the eschatological importance of the Sabbath and the Sealing Message, nevertheless, led Bates to write a seventy-two-page booklet and the Whites to bring out a new broadside, both published in January 1849.<sup>140</sup> The Whites spent most of the beginning of 1849 traveling, preaching, encouraging, and uniting the Sabbatarian brethren in the Sabbath message.

When James returned home from some conference trips, he thought it was time to begin publishing a regular paper, but the “penniless” situation of the Whites filled James again with “doubt and perplexity.” Discouragement then led him to change the plans and he “decided to look for a field of grass to mow.” His discouragement was a heavy burden on his wife, who fainted. Prayer was offered to her, and she was taken off in vision. The vision revealed to her that God would not give James strength to work in the field, for God had “another work for him.” The message through the vision was plain and direct to James: “He must write, write, write, and walk out by faith.”<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1915), 125.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. James White, *A Solemn Appeal to the Ministry*, 5.

<sup>140</sup> Bates, *A Seal of the Living God*; Ellen G. White, “To Those Who Are Receiving the Seal of the Living God,” January 31, 1849; partially repr. in Ellen G. White, “Dear Brethren and Sisters,” *PT*, August 1849, 22–24). For an insightful analysis of Bates’s booklet and the broadside, see Burt, “Historical Background,” 364–375.

<sup>141</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 259–260.

Thus James, “under circumstances the most unfavorable, being destitute of means,” prepared and published the first number of the *Present Truth* in July 1849.<sup>142</sup> Using only “a three-shilling pocket Bible, Cruden’s Condensed Concordance, and Walker’s old dictionary,” James “wrote every word of” the little paper.<sup>143</sup> His responsibilities of writing, correcting, mailing, and walking the distance of about eight miles to visit the printer “two or three times every week” made “the hardest summer’s work” he had ever done in his life.<sup>144</sup> Though James initially entered into this business without much faith, the readers began sending means to help the initiative, and Ellen encouraged her husband.<sup>145</sup>

### Problems in Publishing

There is no doubt that the literature produced by Sabbatarian Adventists was an important instrument that facilitated the promulgation of the message and increased the number of believers.<sup>146</sup> The results were not satisfactory to all, but James still believed and found it necessary to continue the effort for at least two reasons: “to feed those in the

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<sup>142</sup> [James White], “A Brief Sketch of the Past,” *RH*, May 6, 1852, 5; James White, *Life Incidents*, 290. It was published in Middletown, Connecticut.

<sup>143</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “Union Is Strength,” *RH*, June 17, 1880, 393; cf. idem, “Present and Future,” *RH*, September 23, 1880, 216.

<sup>144</sup> James White to Philip and Nancy Collins, September 8, 1849. He added in the same letter, “No one can form a correct idea of the labor of thought, care, and perplexity of publishing until they try it.”

<sup>145</sup> [James White], “The Paper,” *PT*, December 1849, 47; cf. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:88; James White, “The Cause,” *RH*, July 23, 1857, 93.

<sup>146</sup> In early November (four months after launching *PT*), James wrote: “In Western N.Y. the number of Sabbath keepers is ... more than twice ... now than six months ago. So it is more or less in Maine, Mass., N.H., Vermont, and Conn.” (James White to John C. Bowles, November 8, 1849).

truth,” and to wake up others on the Sabbath question.<sup>147</sup> However, after publishing several issues, James became discouraged again. Lack of incentive and help burdened and clouded his work. Depression filled him.<sup>148</sup>

James’s troubles mounted with the differences he had with Joseph Bates regarding the paper. Bates had already published some pamphlets and was not enthusiastic about the regular periodical, believing instead that pamphlets were more efficient in spreading the present truth.<sup>149</sup> Bates’s opposition led him to refuse to help James with the paper for a year,<sup>150</sup> and the pressure was so huge that James resolved to give up the paper. The burden of sharing the message, nevertheless, did not leave him. In this “depressed, miserable state of mind,” James was blessed with a vision Ellen had where she saw that he should continue writing and publishing the paper.<sup>151</sup> So, despite the difficulties, James continued with the paper.

The conflict over periodicals did not end at that time. It seems that Ellen was quiet during the debates between James and Joseph Bates, and her silence seemed to strengthen Bates in his position of not supporting the periodical. Bates was a man who did not move

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<sup>147</sup> James White to John C. Bowles, November 8, 1849.

<sup>148</sup> James penned, “As for the poor little paper it has so little sympathy, and (I fear) so few prayers that I think it will die. I am in deep trial. . . . I want to work for God, but to publish is an uphill work unless there are many prayers ascending, and an interest to sustain a paper. . . . I think I shall hang all up for the present” (James White to Leonard and Elvira Hastings, January 3, 1850).

<sup>149</sup> V. Robinson, *James White*, 62–63; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:171. For other disagreements between James White and Joseph Bates, see Knight, *Joseph Bates*, 152–171.

<sup>150</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “Making Us a Name,” *RH*, April 26, 1860, 182; cf. Ellen G. White, Untitled, Ms 15, 1850.

<sup>151</sup> James White to Leonard Hastings, January 10, 1850; cf. Knight, *Joseph Bates*, 163–164.

easily from his positions, but he was open to direct messages from the visions.<sup>152</sup> In an 1850 manuscript, Ellen wrote plainly about Bates, some of his teachings, and his mistake in not supporting the periodical.<sup>153</sup> In another manuscript written at about the same time, Ellen wrote,

I saw that a paper was needed and that all should be interested in it. I saw that the burden of the paper was laid on James, and that it was as important to publish the truth as to preach it. I saw that James should not be discouraged if all did not feel the interest in the paper that he did. I saw that Brother Bates had not the interest in the paper that he should have, and that his lack of interest has discouraged James. I saw that James should set his face as a flint, and go forward. I saw the flock looking for the paper, and were ready like hungry children to eat the truth published in it.<sup>154</sup>

Bates's teachings and attitudes affected James, even to the point of destroying his "confidence in Bro. Bates." However, Bates was not the only one who deserved rebuke. James had also become jealous of Bates. "I saw," wrote Ellen, "that James at first had godly jealousy for the truth, then other jealousy crept in until he was jealous of most every move Bro. Bates would make." "These wrongs," she asserted, "must be taken out of the way."<sup>155</sup> She appealed for union and love among the brethren:

Then I saw James and Bro. Bates. Said the angel, Press together, press together, press together, press together, ye shepherds, lest the sheep be scattered. Love one another ... Swim, swim, swim, plunge deep, deep, deep in the ocean of God's love.

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<sup>152</sup> Ellen rebuked his attitude, "I saw that Bro. Bates must be careful and be willing to receive light that comes in other ways besides through visions. I saw that he was too slow to receive light from his brethren" (Ellen G. White, Untitled, Ms 15, 1850).

<sup>153</sup> Ellen G. White, Untitled, Ms 14, 1850. Later, the vision appeared partially in the *Present Truth* in November 1850, but since it was for a general audience and Bates had already changed his course toward the paper, his name was suppressed; the message only alerted the Sabbatarians about the ones who were teaching errors and rejecting the periodicals (Ellen G. White, "Dear Brethren and Sisters," *PT*, November, 1850, 86–87). Part of the vision that dealt with theology and eschatology was revised and printed in idem, *Early Writings*, 52–54; cf. Knight, *Joseph Bates*, 164–166.

<sup>154</sup> Ellen G. White, "A Vision Given on October 23, 1850," Ms 15, 1850.

<sup>155</sup> Ellen G. White, "A Vision the Lord Gave Me," Ms 14, 1850.

Come into a nearness with God.<sup>156</sup>

Bates accepted the rebuke and changed his attitude. Though Bates had already published an article in the fourth issue of the *Advent Review* (September 1850), it seemed that he was still not totally committed to joining the enterprise. Two months later, however, Bates not only published a revised portion of his earlier book in the *Advent Review*, but also joined the Publishing Committee of the new *Review and Herald*.<sup>157</sup>

In the summer and fall of 1850, James White and a publishing committee of four others edited and published six issues of *The Advent Review*. The paper was made up of selections from Millerite writers and was calculated to rekindle the flame of Adventism in the hearts of the Millerites. In September 1850, the committee published a condensed forty-eight-page reprint of selected articles from previous *Advent Review* issues. In November 1850 James merged both the *Present Truth* and the *Advent Review* into the *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, which came to be known as the *Review and Herald*. It became not only a noteworthy vehicle for disseminating the beliefs of the Sabbatarian Adventists, but also a net of communication among them.<sup>158</sup>

#### Avoiding Publishing the Visions in the *Review*

As the Sabbatarian Adventists entered the new phase they called the “gathering time,” James decided to present the message in a way that avoided prejudice. He had

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<sup>156</sup> Ellen G. White, “A Vision the Lord Gave Me,” Ms 14, 1850.

<sup>157</sup> Bates, “Second Advent Way Marks and High Heaps,” *Advent Review*, September 1850, 51–56; Bates, “Second Advent Way Marks and High Heaps (continued from number 4),” *Advent Review*, November 1850, 65–70; see also, Bates, “The Laodicean Church,” *RH*, November 1850, 7–8.

<sup>158</sup> Loughborough, *Rise and Progress*, 164; Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 323; Knight, *William Miller*, 274; Wheeler, *James White*, 60–62.

published some issues of the *Advent Review* trying to reach out to those who had been with them for the first and second angels's messages. Since one of the main accusations they faced was that Ellen's visions were their platform for doctrines and duty, James decided not to include them in the new *Review and Herald*. He purposed to "publish the visions by themselves," in separate works, "for the benefit of those who believe that God can fulfill His word and give visions 'in the last days.'" An extra was issued containing Ellen's previously published visions and a brief sketch of her experience.<sup>159</sup>

Ellen seemed to quietly accept the notion of not having her visions in the *Review*. She also seemed enthusiastic in writing down the visions to be published in pamphlets.<sup>160</sup> In 1851, while living in Saratoga Springs, New York, James published a book containing the visions, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views*.<sup>161</sup> The printing of the booklet suspended other extra issues with the visions.

During the first five years that James served as main editor of the *Review* (November 1850–late Summer 1855) there were six articles from Ellen White. None of them included the phrase "I saw," or anything similar. All the articles were general

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<sup>159</sup> [James White], untitled note, *RH Extra*, July 21, 1851, [4]. James had also recently written an article discussing his understanding of the gift of prophecy. Though he did not mention the experience of his wife, he clearly defined the biblical view of the manifestation of the gift of prophecy in the "last days" for the "remnant" ([James White], "The Gifts of the Gospel Church," *RH*, April 21, 1851, 70). It was slightly edited and republished twice in later issues (James White, "The Gifts of the Gospel Church," *RH*, June 9, 1853, 13–14, and October 3, 1854, 60–61). See also, Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant*, (Washington, DC: Board of Trustees, Ellen G. White Publications, General Conference, 1959), 51–53.

<sup>160</sup> Ellen G. White to Leonard and Harriet Hastings, (Lt 7) July 27, 1851.

<sup>161</sup> The sixty-four-page pamphlet is considered the first Ellen White book. Most of the material was a reprint of her writings first published in broadsides or articles. The entire work was republished in 1882, in the first section of *Early Writings*. Some accused Ellen of contradictions in her book, and she felt compelled sometimes to answer them through the *Review* (see Ellen G. White, "Dear Brethren and Sisters," *RH*, April 14, 1853, 192), but later, in 1854, she published a booklet that added a few notes of explanation (Ellen G. White, *Supplement to the Christian Experience*).

exhortations. There is no doubt that much of what she wrote was derived from what she had seen in visions, but she never used the force of the prophetic utterance of saying that it had been shown to her through visions and dreams.<sup>162</sup>

“I Shall Publish No More”

During 1851, while living in Paris, Maine, the Whites passed through another period of lack of support from the local brethren, which brought great gloom upon them. Some were skeptical of James’s leadership and Ellen’s visions.<sup>163</sup>

Describing those days, Ellen wrote,

We boarded in Brother [Edward] A[ndrews]’s family. ... We had much care, and often sat up as late as midnight, and sometimes until two or three in the morning to read proof-sheets. We could have better borne these extra exertions could we have had the sympathy of our brethren in Paris, and had they appreciated our labors and the efforts we were making to advance the cause of truth. Mental labor and privation reduced the strength of my husband very fast.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> From 1850 to 1855, Ellen made only two short references to visions in the *RH*: she disclosed the deceptive act of Eli Curtis in republishing her “views” (Ellen G. White, “Eli Curtis,” *RH*, April 7, 1851, 64), and defended herself against accusations of contradictions in her visions (idem, “Dear Brethren and Sisters,” *RH*, April 14, 1853, 192). The first full article from her pen appeared in the *RH* in June 1852, nineteen months after its launch (Ellen G. White, “To the Brethren and Sisters,” *RH*, June 10, 1852, 21). The practice of sporadically printing the visions in the *RH* resumed in 1856 (see idem, “Communication from Sister White,” *RH*, January 10, 1856, 118). Uriah Smith was the resident editor at that time, and Ronald Numbers suggests that this change in the editorship of the *RH* was linked to a power struggle between James, Uriah, and Ellen (Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* [New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1976], 27–30). The evidence, however, shows that James asked to be released from the main editorial responsibility so he could have more time to recover his health and visit the brethren ([James White], “At Home,” and “The Office,” *RH*, September 4, 1855, 36; Uriah Smith, “To the Friends of the Review,” *RH*, December 4, 1855, 76). For a comprehensive response to Numbers’s conclusion, see the document prepared by the staff of the Ellen G. White Estate, *A Critique of the Book Prophetess of Health* (Washington, DC: The Estate, General Conference of SDA, 1976), 38–42.

<sup>163</sup> James White to E. P. Butler, December 12, 1861; Wheeler, *James White*, 104–107; Ron Graybill, “The Family Man,” *Adventist Heritage* 9.1 (Spring 1984), 13; reprinted in *J. N. Andrews: The Man and the Mission*, ed. Harry Leonard (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1985), 18–19.

<sup>164</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 278; cf. James White, *Life Incidents*, 293.

At that time, James was also accused of making money from the publishing business, and the accusers pointed to his good horse as proof of it. Even Bates was among the critics and whisperers.<sup>165</sup> The whispering reached other places and jealousy, indifference, and skepticism spread with it. “This cruel work . . . as cruel as the grave,” almost crushed their spirits.<sup>166</sup>

The Whites’s “faith was tried to the uttermost.” The lack of consideration and appreciation from others was a hard blow for the Whites, especially James. Their time of rest was “spent in answering long communications occasioned by the leaven of envy.” James, discouraged, said, “Wife, it is no use to try to struggle on any longer. These things are crushing me, and will soon carry me to the grave. I cannot go any farther.” He went on, “I have written a note for the paper stating that I shall publish no more.”<sup>167</sup>

Ellen fainted and was relieved by James’s prayer. She then was taken in vision and it was shown to her that James should not “give up the paper,” but “must continue to publish, and that the Lord would sustain him.” A rebuke followed for those who were crushing James’s spirit.

Those who had been guilty in casting upon him such burdens would have to see the extent of their cruel course, and come back confessing their injustice, or the frown of God would rest upon them; that it was not against us merely they had spoken and acted, but against Him who had called us to fill the place he wished us to occupy, and that all their suspicions, jealousy, and secret influence which had been at work, was faithfully chronicled in heaven, and would not be blotted out until every one who had

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<sup>165</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:205–206; Wheeler, *James White*, 64–65; James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 279–280; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:145–146.

<sup>166</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 280.

<sup>167</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 280–281; cf. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:146–148.



taken a part in it should see the extent of their wrong course, and retrace every step.<sup>168</sup>

Virgil Robinson points out that “this was the sixth and last time that James White proposed to stop printing and was kept from doing so by the testimony of his wife.”<sup>169</sup> Soon they received several invitations to attend meetings and began traveling again.

When the Sabbatarians purchased their own printing press in 1852, they began taking advantage of it to publish other periodicals and literature. In August 1852, James initiated *The Youth’s Instructor*, a paper for the youth of the church.<sup>170</sup> It was filled with doctrinal articles, including the Sabbath School Lessons.

#### The Whites and the Publications

Summarizing the White’s early experience in publishing, it is clear that as soon as the Whites became convinced of the truths they had discovered in the Bible, they made efforts to spread the word. Soon they realized that publications were one of the most efficient tools for the propagation of the message. After the Millerite Adventist periodicals at the time began to change their theology or cease publications, the Whites began a Sabbatarian Adventist paper. Pamphlets, broadsides, and articles in other papers had done their work, but a regular publication would be more efficient.

Though the Sabbatarians agreed that they should share the message in a broader manner, they were not united on which tool they should use. When the Whites decided on a regular periodical, as directed by Ellen’s vision, they faced opposition and endured

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<sup>168</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, 281–282; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:148.

<sup>169</sup> V. Robinson, *James White*, 71.

<sup>170</sup> [James White], “A Paper for Children,” *RH*, July 8, 1852, 37.

severe trials due to the lack of support from others. Several times, James felt depressed and wanted to give up the project. However, because the Whites shared the same goal, they passed through the trials with love, prayer, work, and support from each other. There is no record of any disagreement in their methods of work, except that James sometimes could not see how to implement what had been shown in vision to his wife. This, combined with external circumstances, poverty, feebleness, and time, would sometimes delay the project. In the end the Whites were successful in their enterprises, largely because they obeyed the visions and each had the spiritual, emotional, and fraternal companionship of a loyal spouse.

## Family Dynamics

### Commencing Family and House-Keeping

When James met Ellen in 1845, she was taking her first steps toward a definite ministry. In the relationship that developed, as pointed out by Graybill, they “both knew from the outset that their marriage would not be the typical Victorian arrangement in which the wife was expected only to care for children, nurture her husband, and physically maintain the home.”<sup>171</sup>

During the period addressed in this chapter, the Whites’s home was blessed with three boys: Henry Nichols, born August 26, 1847; James Edson, born July 28, 1849; and William Clarence, born August 29, 1854. A fourth son was born some years later. Theirs was an average-sized American family for the time. Married couples in nineteenth-

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<sup>171</sup> Graybill, “The Power of Prophecy,” 5; cf. Degler, *At Odds*, 8–9, 26.

century America were reducing their childbearing and had slightly smaller families than their predecessors: those who married between 1800 and 1849 averaged 4.9 children.<sup>172</sup>

The Whites's two elder sons spent most of their first years away from their parents. This grieved the Whites's hearts, especially Ellen. They missed the company of their little ones and the blessings of a united family. Extensive traveling, feeble health, heavy responsibilities, and few financial resources meant that James and Ellen were apart from their sons during half of their first decade together. However, the little boys were not abandoned. Henry stayed with the Howlands, a family in whom the Whites "had the utmost confidence," and who "could take better care of Henry" than the Whites could while journeying. The Whites could trust that the place "was for his good that he should have a steady place, and strict discipline, that his sweet temper be not injured,"<sup>173</sup> and they had "perfect confidence" in the Howlands's "ability to train the child for heaven."<sup>174</sup>

The decision to entrust Henry to the Howlands was not easy. Four months after Henry's birth (December 1847), he became extremely ill: his breathing turned quick and heavy and he lay unconscious. Prayers ascended to heaven, but the boy did not recover. Ellen realized that their use of the child as an excuse to avoid traveling was probably the reason he was being taken from them. When they changed their prayer to put the work first and then asked for healing, things changed for the better. "We had made the child,"

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<sup>172</sup> Robert V. Wells, *Uncle Sam's Family: Issues in and Perspectives on American Demographic History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985), 29–30.

<sup>173</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:107. "The Whites arranged for the Howlands to keep Henry for \$1 a week, which Otis Nichols promised to supply. But after a few weeks all pay was refused, and Henry lived with the Howlands for five years. They provided not only a good home but clothing as well, except for a little garment that Ellen brought each year" (Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:152; cf. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:iii, 107–108; idem, *Life Sketches*, 120).

<sup>174</sup> James White, "Eastern Tour," *RH*, November 1, 1853, 133.

Ellen commented, “an excuse for not traveling and laboring for the good of others, and we feared the Lord was about to remove him.” They promised to be faithful to their mission, the boy was healed, and they resumed their responsibilities.<sup>175</sup>

Leaving her child with others was “the greatest sacrifice” Ellen “was called to make in connection with the work.”<sup>176</sup> This was not only hard for Ellen, but also a great test for James.<sup>177</sup> Ellen wrote sadly,

Again I was called to deny self for the good of souls. We must sacrifice the company of our little Henry, and go forth to give ourselves unreservedly to the work. . . . It was a severe trial, yet I dared not let my child stand in the way of our duty. . . . Alone before the Lord, with most painful feelings, and many tears, I made the sacrifice, and gave up my only child, for another to have a mother’s care and feelings. . . . It was hard parting with my child. His little sad face, as I left him, was before me night and day; yet in the strength of the Lord I put him out of my mind, and sought to do others good.<sup>178</sup>

When their second son was born in July 1849, James was very busy preparing material for the *Present Truth*, and Ellen had some months to take care of the baby.<sup>179</sup> But it could not be for long. The duty called them, and the children were deprived of their parents’s company. Ellen was sometimes tempted to complain of a hard life, but she controlled herself to be in a good spirit, because she believed the sacrifice was for a good

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<sup>175</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 243–244; cf. [Ellen G. White] to Henry White, J. Edson White and William C. White, (Lt 23) September 20, 1859; quoted in *An Appeal to the Youth*, 47.

<sup>176</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:101; cf. 1:87, 581.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. James White to Philip and Nancy Collins, August 26, 1848; James White, *Life Incidents*, 293.

<sup>178</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:107–108; James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 254–255.

<sup>179</sup> Ellen G. White to Leonard and Elvira Hastings, (Lt 18) January 11, 1850.

cause.<sup>180</sup> When the family was reunited again in Rochester, in 1852, the Whites were very grateful to those who “without the least expense” had cared for their two older sons. After five years, James gladly wrote that Henry returned to them as “a well trained, praying boy.”<sup>181</sup>

### Extended Family

The Whites were also affected by deaths in their extended family. They lost Robert Harmon, Ellen’s brother, in February 1853; Nathaniel, James’s brother, in May 1853; and Anna, James’s sister, in November 1854. All of them were young and physically feeble, and James’s siblings had been part of the family for a while.<sup>182</sup>

Although Nathan and Anna “were both invalids,” James and Ellen cordially extended an invitation for them to live with them in Rochester. They worked together and their hearts were united, but when their health did not improve, it was a hard blow for the Whites to mourn their deaths.

Here we see the harmony between the Whites. James’s siblings were not healthy, and the Whites lived in a crowded place in Rochester; nevertheless, Ellen accepted them into their house. James’s “feelings were touched” by his brother, who had asked to live with them. Nathaniel was very weak physically and was not a Sabbath believer, but the

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<sup>180</sup> Ellen G. White to Reuben and Belinda Loveland, (Lt 30) December 13, 1850; James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 269–270.

<sup>181</sup> James White, “Eastern Tour,” *RH*, November 1, 1853, 133. The Whites’s children seemed to have naturally good dispositions, at least in Ellen’s view. Comparing Edson with some “ill-tempered” children, Ellen wrote, “I thought of my little Edson and felt thankful he was not like them” (Ellen G. White to Anna White, (Lt 2) May 26, 1853).

<sup>182</sup> Robert was 27, Nathaniel was 22, and Anna was 26.

Whites warmly opened their house to him, considering that it would be an opportunity to improve his health. He eventually accepted the Sabbath, but died soon after.<sup>183</sup>

### Comforting and Supporting in Illnesses

During these first years together, as the family grew and the itinerary became busier, both James and Ellen had to support each other in extended periods of poor health. James wrote in the beginning of 1854, “Poor health has been our greatest discouragement for the last six years.”<sup>184</sup> Ellen was pregnant with her third son, and at the same time afflicted with breathing difficulties that made her faint several times. Moreover, she had “a swelling which appeared to be a cancer” on her left eyelid. According to her account, “it had been more than a year increasing gradually until it was quite painful and affected” her sight. She was forced “to bandage the afflicted eye” while reading or writing. A physician gave no hope and thought she would die of apoplexy (stroke). A month later, she had a stroke. Her left side was paralyzed and her tongue was heavy and numb. Prayers seemed to go unanswered, but Ellen wrote, “I whispered to my husband, ‘I believe that I shall recover.’” Skeptically James answered, “I wish I could believe it.” She “retired that night without relief, yet relying with firm confidence upon the promises of God.” As she could not sleep, she continued silently praying to God. She finally slept, and when she awoke, the pain was gone. A few days later, the swelling was

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<sup>183</sup> James White, “Obituary,” *RH*, May 26, 1853, 8; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:173.

<sup>184</sup> [James White], “At Home,” *RH*, February 28, 1854, 48.

gone, and her eyesight was restored. Ellen was then ready to accompany her husband again.<sup>185</sup>

After Anna White died, James's health was deeply affected. James "was troubled with cough and soreness of lungs, and his nervous system was prostrated." Ellen enumerated several factors that troubled James:

His anxiety of mind, the burdens which he bore in Rochester, his labor in the Office, the sickness and repeated deaths in the family, the lack of sympathy from those who should have shared his labors, together with his traveling and preaching, were too much for his strength, and he seemed to be fast following Nathaniel and Anna to a consumptive's grave. It was a time of thick gloom and darkness. A few rays of light occasionally parted these heavy clouds, giving us a little hope, or we should have sunk in despair. It seemed at times that God had forsaken us.<sup>186</sup>

During those "days of sadness," Ellen feared that her three little boys would soon "be left fatherless." The Whites went alone before God and engaged in earnest prayer for the recovery of James's health, and he began to gradually improve. Through a vision, they were also instructed to "exercise strong faith" and "look away from outward appearance," or else they would succumb. Together they faced these days and when hope was almost gone, they earnestly joined their petitions to God. These joined prayers united them, and they enjoyed those precious moments of intense prayer.<sup>187</sup>

### James Taking Care of Ellen

During the first ten years of the Whites's relationship it was evident that they shared not only a close association in beliefs, ideas, and mission, but also a strong

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<sup>185</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 304, 306–307.

<sup>186</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:194–195.

<sup>187</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:197–199.

affection for each other. Since both of them had serious physical problems, they took care of each other. In times of depression and discouragement, they supported and encouraged each other. These experiences linked them closely, developing their care, affection, and love for each other.

Ellen was recognized as a young lady with a fragile physical constitution. Her marriage to James ended up being very helpful to her spiritually, socially, emotionally, and also physically. When James was not prostrate physically, he was present as a timely helper for her.

On a trip to Wisconsin in May 1854, the Whites were in a terrible train accident. Some passengers died and several were injured, but the Whites and their “large trunk of books” were safe. At this accident scene, amid confusion and “agonizing groans,” James protected his wife. Ellen described the tender manner in which James helped her: “We hastily left the car; and my husband took me in his arms, and, wading in the water, carried me across a swampy piece of land to the main road.”<sup>188</sup>

On another occasion when they were traveling, “despondency pressed upon” Ellen over the distance of her sons and the care of the work. In her gloominess she exclaimed, “It won’t pay! It won’t pay! So much labor to accomplish so little.” Because Ellen “was unable to sit up,” James promptly “made a bed on the seat,” and she “laid down with aching head and heart.” As they continued the trip, they were obliged to stop about every ten miles for Ellen to rest, and James carefully assisted her each time. She

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<sup>188</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 308; cf. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:188–191; Loughborough, “Recollections of the Past—No. 10,” *RH*, January 27, 1885, 57–58.



wrote, “My husband braided the tall grass and tied the horse to it, giving him a chance to feed, then spread my cloak upon the grass for a resting place for me.”<sup>189</sup>

Many years later, near the end of her life, Ellen looked back and gratefully affirmed, “I had been all my life an invalid, and tenderly and patiently had my husband sympathized with, watched over, and cared for me when I was suffering.”<sup>190</sup>

### Dealing with Accusations

James and Ellen met serious accusations on several occasions. These initially came from those who disagreed with them doctrinally, but soon the spirit of accusation permeated the hearts of some within Sabbatarian Adventism.

In the early period of their ministry, they were charged with diverse things. Some accused Ellen of fanaticism or mesmerism (hypnotism).<sup>191</sup> Others charged Sabbatarians, including the Whites, of professing “to be the ‘angel descending from the East, having the seal of the living God.’”<sup>192</sup> The Whites’s attitude of rebuking errors often led the rebuked to accuse them of being at the other extreme. When Ellen rebuked those who were taking “extreme views of certain texts of scripture, refraining wholly from labor, and rejecting all those who” disagreed with them, Ellen was charged “with conforming to the world.” Others charged her with fanaticism. When teaching others about not setting

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<sup>189</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, 269–270; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:129–130.

<sup>190</sup> E[llen] G. White, “Early Counsels on Medical Work—No. 4: Blessings Through Prayer,” *RH*, Apr 23, 1914, 3.

<sup>191</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, 219–220; cf. [James White], “Mesmerism,” *RH*, May 6, 1852, 8.

<sup>192</sup> [James] W[hite], “Our Visit to Vermont,” *RH*, February 1851, 46; cf. [James White?], “Not So,” *RH*, December 23, 1851, 72.

times for the Coming of Jesus, she was accused of “being the evil servant that said: ‘My Lord delayeth His coming.’” On the other hand, some ministers charged Ellen with setting “time after time for the Lord to come,” and tried to prove that her visions were false.<sup>193</sup> It seems that the Whites could not escape accusations. When they corrected others, the people affected either accepted the rebuke or charged the Whites with the other opposite extreme.

The work of James and Ellen included defending the pillars of the faith and pinpointing the errors of those who had been misled in their interpretation of the Bible. Because they were sometimes clear and direct, they were called “harsh and unchristian.” This accusation touched the Whites’s feelings, since they believed that they were “honestly and in love” bringing believers back to the biblical teachings and saving them from “certain ruin.”<sup>194</sup> They recognized that their enemies were active and some were prejudiced against the Sabbatarian message. Their counsel was that Sabbatarians might be active as well, but in love.<sup>195</sup> Occasionally, when people met the Whites personally and talked to them, the barrier of seeing them as harsh (as they had heard from their enemies) was removed.<sup>196</sup>

James always argued that as Sabbatarians should present their message “with the utmost care, with the glory of God in view,” not with “a careless spirit.” He also

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<sup>193</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:72–73.

<sup>194</sup> [James White], “To Ira Fancher,” *RH*, March 1851, 52.

<sup>195</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “Our Tour West,” *RH*, February 3, 1852, 86–87.

<sup>196</sup> [James White], “The Cause Wounded,” *RH*, August 19, 1851, 11; [idem], “Our Tour East,” *RH*, November 25, 1851, 52.

cautioned about the other extreme—that some would always accuse them of being harsh unless they renounced their beliefs. James wrote,

Here we wish to say that those who oppose the truth of God will not be satisfied with the spirit we manifest until we renounce the precious truth we so much prize. This we shall never do to suit any one. . . . God’s word shall here be our standard, and that teaches that we should forsake every earthly friend sooner than the truth of God. But while proclaiming the most cutting truths of Revelation, and separating ourselves from sin and sinners we may exhibit all the fruit of the Spirit of God.<sup>197</sup>

Probably the main accusation against the Whites and Sabbatarians was that the group followed the visions instead of the Bible.<sup>198</sup> James and Ellen always counteracted this with their voices and pens, presenting a balanced position on the place of her gift and its relationship to the authority of the Bible.

### Dealing with Dissidents

#### Messenger Party

The first offshoot from the Sabbatarian Adventists was what became known as the *Messenger* party.<sup>199</sup> In June 1853, the Whites had just headed to Michigan, and an episode in Jackson was the pivot of the split. When Ellen rebuked two leaders of the church in Jackson, H. S. Case and C. P. Russell, for the bitter manner in which they accused a woman who had committed a mistake, they turned against the visions and “began to challenge . . . Elder White’s financial handling of the printing office.” They also

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<sup>197</sup> [James White], “A Word of Caution,” *RH*, July 8, 1852, 40; cf. *idem.*, “Eastern Tour,” *RH*, October 18, 1853, 117.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Nath’l Jones, “Bro. Cole,” *Bible Advocate*, August 26, 1847, 30; quoted in Burt, “Historical Background,” 333; [James White], “The Cause Wounded,” *RH*, August 19, 1851, 11; Levterov, “The Development,” 84–86, 100–105.

<sup>199</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Messenger Party”; For more on the Messenger party, see Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:276–277; 306–310; V. Robinson, *James White*, 96–97, 105–106; D. E. Robinson, “Meeting Early Apostasies,” DF 349-a, CAR-AU.

presented the “shut-door” theory as evidence that the Whites could not be trusted in matters of doctrine and were “exalting her testimonies above the Bible.”<sup>200</sup> Soon they began publishing a periodical entitled *The Messenger of Truth* that spoke against the visions, opposed James’s leadership, and accused “Sabbatarians of an un-Christian spirit against those who did not agree with them.”<sup>201</sup>

As the accusations proliferated, James used his influence to calm the brethren and remind them that those who followed the truth could “expect severe trials,” and “those trials which arise among ourselves are the most severe.” He also advised that the church’s duty was not to contend with the dissidents, but to alert “the flock to beware of the influence of those who cause divisions, then leave the matter in the hands of God.”<sup>202</sup> However, the accusations and falsehoods continued and James, dealing for the first time with a dissident situation, decided not to merely “leave the matter in the hands of God.” Instead, a committee of five was formed to respond to the “slanderous things placed in the *Messenger*.”<sup>203</sup> A vision given to Ellen, however, instructed them that they should not “come down to answer such falsehoods, misrepresentations, and slanders as the

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<sup>200</sup> Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 89, 613; cf. James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880, 1888), 302–303, 312; James White, “Western Tour,” *RH*, May 23, 1854, 142; J. N. Andrews, R. F. Cottrell, and U. Smith, “Malicious Insinuation,” *RH*, November 21, 1854, 117; A. Miles, “From Bro. Miles,” *RH*, December 5, 1854, 125–126; Pub. Comm., untitled note, *RH*, December 5, 1854, 126; William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White—XVI. A Visit to Michigan,” *RH*, June 27, 1935, 6–7; D. E. Robinson, “Meeting Early Apostasies.”

<sup>201</sup> Levterov, “The Development,” 81, cf. 83–94.

<sup>202</sup> [James White], “Our Position: Its Trials and Duties Considered,” *RH*, September 5, 1854, 28–29.

<sup>203</sup> Loughborough, “Sketches of the Past—No. 99,” *PUR*, June 30, 1910, 1; idem, *The Great Second Advent Movement*, 325–326.

*Messenger* party ... have scattered abroad.”<sup>204</sup> Not long after, the *Messenger* party began having internal problems and soon the group split and scattered.<sup>205</sup>

### Age-to-Come

In 1854, another dissident group began to evolve among Sabbatarians. Two prominent Adventist preachers from Wisconsin, J. M. Stephenson and D. P. Hall, embraced the age-to-come theory. Though there were variations of this theory, a basic teaching was that Christ would come and install His throne in Palestine, and the earth would enjoy a period of grace—another chance for salvation after the Coming of Christ.<sup>206</sup> Some held that the three angels’s messages would be preached after this Coming.<sup>207</sup> This teaching had been repudiated by the Millerites and then by the Sabbatarian Adventists.<sup>208</sup>

James, knowing the position of Stephenson and Hall, but trying to preserve unity among the Sabbathkeepers, agreed “in June 1854, to keep silent on the subject in the *Review* ... if these men likewise would be silent on it and devote their energies” to preaching the Adventist message. It was soon discovered that the men were not keeping silence, but were preaching the dissident teaching in Adventist meetings in Wisconsin in

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<sup>204</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:122–123; William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White—XVI. A Visit to Michigan,” *RH*, June 27, 1935, 7. She dates the vision to June 1855.

<sup>205</sup> Loughborough, “Sketches of the Past—No. 99,” *PUR*, June 30, 1910, 1; idem, *The Great Second Advent Movement*, 326–327.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. J. H. W[aggoner], “The ‘Age to Come,’” *RH*, December 11, 1855, 84–85. One of the main papers that promoted this theory was *The Advent Harbinger*.

<sup>207</sup> [James White], “Babylon,” *RH*, June 24, 1852, 82.

<sup>208</sup> Hiram Edson, “The Age to Come,” *Advent Review Extra*, September 1850, 14–16; [James White], “Our Present Work,” *RH*, August 19, 1851, 12–13; M. E. Cornell, “Joseph Marsh’s Misrepresentations,” *RH*, September 16, 1852, 78; J. B. Frisbie, “Age to Come,” *RH*, January 24, 1854, 6.

1855. Stephenson and Hall soon joined the *Messenger* party and began using their paper, *Messenger of Truth*, to denounce and accuse the Sabbathkeepers, especially James and Ellen.<sup>209</sup> It served as a lesson for James and the church.<sup>210</sup>

#### Sabbatarian Friends Defend the Whites

Accusations and falsehoods greatly impacted James's emotional and physical health. During the summer of 1853, James's health had been deteriorating and his spirit was depressed, partly because of the accusations and unfair treatment from others.<sup>211</sup> Through visions to Ellen, God spoke directly to James to encourage him and show him the right path. James was looking "on the dark side" and "appearance too much, and did not trust so fully in God as he should."<sup>212</sup> James did not rebel against the message but recognized his shortcomings. He wrote to a friend, "My health is poor. But the Lord shall reveal His will to raise me up. I wish I had more faith—was more like Christ."<sup>213</sup>

In order to clarify the matter and vindicate James of false accusations about his handling of the printing office, the publishing committee published a short note about James's conduct in the *Review*.

The Brethren assembled in Conference at Rochester deem it duty to make an

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<sup>209</sup> *SDA Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Messenger Party;" Loughborough, *Rise and Progress*, 204–208. Ellen White adds, "And while my husband was open-hearted and unsuspecting, seeking ways to remove their jealousy, and frankly opening to them the affairs of the Office, and trying to help and assist them, they were watching for evil, and observing every thing with a jealous eye" (Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4b:4; cf. idem, *Testimonies*, 1:116–118).

<sup>210</sup> J. H. W[aggoner], "The 'Age to Come,'" *RH*, December 11, 1855, 84–85.

<sup>211</sup> James White to Abraham Dodge, July 31, 1853.

<sup>212</sup> Ellen G. White, "Extracts of Visions," Ms 5, 1853; cf. Ellen G. White to Abram A. and Caroline Dodge, (Lt 6) August 3, 1853.

<sup>213</sup> James White to Abram Dodge, July 31, 1853.

expression of their sentiment with regard to the course of Bro. James White in the publication of the *Advent Review*, and also the management of other business entrusted to his care.

Resolved unanimously, That the course of Brother White in the management of the Paper and of the business entrusted to his care meets our full approval, and that he has our confidence and sympathy in the course which he has pursued.<sup>214</sup>

Though some regretted accusing James, and publicly confessed their error,<sup>215</sup> the accusing did not stop. More than a year later, accusations were still being made. The committee then resolved to issue another note in defense of James,

It remains that we say a word relative to Brother White. His faithfulness in attempting to correct the wayward and fanatical course of these men in the past, makes him now the special object of attack. It is with pleasure therefore that we here express our confidence in his integrity and uprightness. The course which he has pursued in the management of the ADVENT REVIEW, meets our decided approbation. We feel sure that those who have witnessed his untiring efforts to serve the cause of God, will not be moved by the calumnies of those who have not the fear of God before their eyes. As these disaffected individuals influence the minds of some honest persons by their slanderous falsehoods, we would say that if any brother or sister wishes an explanation of any of their statements they can obtain it by addressing the Publishing Committee.”<sup>216</sup>

In the same note, the committee reaffirmed their position regarding doctrines, the Bible, and the gift of prophecy. Other notes defending James’s labor and dedication were published in the *Review* either by someone connected with the Review office or by James himself explaining the matter.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Bates and J. N. Andrews, “Expression of the Conference,” *RH*, August 4, 1853, 48.

<sup>215</sup> H. S. Case, “From Bro. Case,” *RH*, August 28, 1853, 64.

<sup>216</sup> J. N. Andrews, R. F. Cottrell, and Uriah Smith, “To the Readers of the Advent Review,” *RH*, November 7, 1854, 101.

<sup>217</sup> J. N. Andrews, R. F. Cottrell, and U. Smith, “Malicious Insinuation,” *RH*, November 21, 1854, 117; Pub. Com., “The Office,” *RH*, December 5, 1854, 124–125; Pub. Com., “Affairs Connected with the Office,” *RH*, December 26, 1854, 149–150; [James White], “The Office,” *RH*, February 20, 1855, 182–183; James White, “The Office,” *RH*, July 24, 1855, 12–13.

## Ellen Defends James

Overwork combined with poor health led to the deterioration of James's vigor. As James was succumbing, Ellen made it known that not all were helping James. Some who should have sympathized with James and helped to alleviate his burdens were instead accusing and "press[ing] the weight upon him still heavier." In view of the years James had put into labor for the cause, and the amount of service he had provided, Ellen believed that were he to die, he would be "a martyr to the cause of present truth."<sup>218</sup> She feared that "poor James" would "fall a sacrifice to his incessant labors." She advised him to "leave the work sometimes and have quiet rest."<sup>219</sup> James "had broken down by abundant labor and care," and he "had done more than God required ... and some had been saved by this over-labor."<sup>220</sup>

The office's debts mounted and the books were few, and James feared that he would die in debt. The brethren in Michigan decided to assist the Whites and prepared the way for them to move to Battle Creek, "obtaining a lot, and building a house." The "deed was made out in" Ellen's name, so she "could dispose of it at pleasure after the death of" James.<sup>221</sup> Thus, in the fall of 1855, the Whites moved to Michigan and initiated a new chapter in their lives and in the history of Sabbatarian Adventism.

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<sup>218</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:198, 197.

<sup>219</sup> Ellen G. White to Brethren and Sisters [friends and/or family, exact identity unknown], (Lt 5) December 16, 1854; James White, "Private," 1855.

<sup>220</sup> James White, "Private," 1855.

<sup>221</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:197.



## Conclusion

James White and Ellen Harmon met each other in early 1845. From the beginning, James was convinced that Ellen's visions and calling were authentic manifestations of the Spirit of prophecy. As Ellen came to accept and trust the companionship of James, he began accompanying the group as they visited others, strengthening the faith of believers and combating fanaticism. The couple's closeness led to a mutual admiration and a conviction that they would be helpful to each other. Thus, after prayerful consideration, they decided to marry in the summer of 1846. Their mission and work radically changed their lives: they moved from an anonymous position among Millerite Adventists to a place of influence that led them to join with others and organize Sabbatarian Adventism.

The first decade of the Whites's married life was filled with poverty, ill health, and sometimes distress. Because they entered their new life with scarcity of means and health as well as the heavy responsibility of spreading the Sabbatarian Adventist message, James had to divide his time between hard manual labor and constant traveling and preaching with his wife. When he began publishing, his responsibility increased even further. Lack of support from friends and false accusations led James to some days of deep sorrow and anguish.

The birth of their sons brought joy to the Whites, but when Ellen realized the impossibility of having the children with them and keeping up with their busy traveling schedule and activities, she faced her greatest challenge; she left the children with close friends for their first years. Despite adverse circumstances, the Whites were filled with joy and satisfaction in serving God and others with their lives, talents, and scarce means.

Although they faced opposition and difficulties, the Whites saw positive results from their work. The small group was growing, and several accepted the Sabbatarian message. However, their hard work in launching periodicals, printing tracts and booklets containing the Adventist message, traveling, writing, editing, and publishing, as well as the emergence of dissident groups, debts, accusations of mismanagement of means, and deaths in their extended family, discouraged them, damaged their health, and pressured them to give up their responsibilities. As a team, the Whites not only encouraged each other in the progressive times, but were anchors for each other in the stormy days. Difficulties and problems brought the Whites closer, and their encouragement of one another, persistence, and faithfulness to the light received prepared them for great responsibilities.

A comprehensive look indicates that while Ellen was more affected by their situation in itself—e.g., extreme poverty, distance of her sons, illnesses, etc.—James was discouraged and depressed most by the exaggerated and false accusations. He relied on the visions and emotional support from his wife to endure the afflictions, sickness, poverty, lack of support from friends, and hard work. Through the affection and companionship of her husband, Ellen endured the distance of the children, her ill health, and the uncomfortable long trips.

During this period, the Whites often faced moments of discouragement, but because they looked forward to the same goal, they found strength to pass through the trials with love, prayer, and support from each other. They agreed on their methods of work, except when hard circumstances blinded James to how he could implement what had been shown in vision to his wife. Their relationship in its first years was one of a

husband and a wife who worked together, enjoyed each other's companionship, and endured trials through total dependence on God, faithfulness to their mission, and deep care, love, loyalty, and friendship for each other.

In the processes of family development, it is recognized that "family bonds form as family members or potential family members take care of one another."<sup>222</sup> When members of the family are close to help each other it facilitates coping with crisis or stressful moments. During the period presented in this chapter the Whites began their marital relationship and faced difficulties. Though the period was not an easy one, their family bonds were strengthened as they helped each other through words and actions. Together James and Ellen could face the problems, and "express the assurance that 'together, we can face anything,' or at least, we can face anything better together than we can on our own as individuals." In these they were successful in their marital relationship as they worked together to solve or to pass through the tribulations. Their commitment to meeting one another's needs, saved them from "a sense of 'resource scarcity,' insecurity with one another and family fragmentation."<sup>223</sup>

Garland points out that "as a consequence of caregiving, family members become attached to one another."<sup>224</sup> This chapter showed that James and Ellen liked to be together and missed each other, and also missed their children when they were distant. Attachment is an important factor in a functional family. According to Garland,

Attachment is demonstrated in three ways: (1) family members experience a need

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<sup>222</sup> Garland, *Family Ministry*, 192.

<sup>223</sup> Garland, *Family Ministry*, 192.

<sup>224</sup> Garland, *Family Ministry*, 199.

to be with one another when experiencing distress; (2) the presence of other family members brings a sense of comfort and diminished anxiety, even when the other cannot really “fix” what is causing the distress; and (3) separation from the other and an inability to be reunited creates anxiety.<sup>225</sup>

Thus, answering the questions presented in the first chapter, during the first ten years of their relationship, it can be summarized that in the Whites marriage there was the presence of mutual affection. Despite financial limitations, excess of work to establish and maintain the newborn Sabbatarian Adventist movement, expansion of the family with the inclusion of children and at the same time distance from them because of a busy missionary schedule, internal conflict and criticism from some Sabbatarians and outsiders, their relationship was impacted positively. Their first experiences and trials solidified their family bonds.

A superficial look might suggest that their marriage was a union of convenience: Ellen needed a protector and James someone who would help in his ministry. However, if the marriage had not been founded on the biblical pattern of a sacred commitment and loving affection, it might not have survived that first decade of such difficult times. Had it not been placed on a solid basis of cooperation, either their relationship could have failed or their commitment to mission as a team could have been discarded. Nevertheless, their commitments to the marriage relationship and to the mission both prospered.

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<sup>225</sup> Garland, *Family Ministry*, 199–200.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE FIRST DECADE IN BATTLE CREEK (1855–1865)

#### Introduction

In the fall of 1855, James White and his family moved to Michigan. The next decade would be significantly important for them. The Sabbatarian Adventists had formulated their doctrinal foundation; established an effective publishing ministry with periodicals and pamphlets; and faced the first dissidents among themselves, which turned out to be an experience that strengthened the group, even though they lost some prominent ministers and members. The difficult experiences the Whites had faced in previous years brought them closer to each other and fortified their relationship. The new decade in their lives was intense; they diligently worked together to organize the church and began spreading significant messages related to lifestyle that played a role in the Sabbatarian way of preaching, living, and preparing for the Second Coming of Jesus.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and evaluate the major events and experiences that had a meaningful impact on the relationship between the Whites as they began a new chapter in their lives and ministry.

#### Chronological Overview

#### Arriving in Battle Creek

As soon as the Whites moved to Battle Creek, the Adventists decided to have a general meeting to seek a greater experience with God. Among other issues, the group analyzed the relationship between the visions and the responsibility of the church. This led Ellen to publish the first of a series of *Testimonies for the Church*, which she added to

for most of her life-ministry.<sup>1</sup> This work became the first installment of a series of pamphlets that were published during the next decades; and by 1909, the *Testimonies* comprised nine volumes with nearly 5,000 pages.

The move to Battle Creek began a new era for the Whites. Previously James had experienced a severe physical infirmity that Ellen feared would leave her a widow and the children fatherless. James “was troubled with cough and soreness of lungs, and his nervous system was prostrated.” His health became poor due to “anxiety of mind” and excessive burdens in the Office besides his schedule of traveling and preaching; “the sickness and repeated deaths in the family” (James’s siblings Nathaniel and Anna) and “the lack of sympathy from those who should have shared his labors . . . were too much for his strength,” and he seemed to be dying. Ellen described those days as “a time of thick gloom and darkness.” Incessant prayers were sent to heaven and James was restored.<sup>2</sup> As they arrived in Battle Creek, Ellen sensed that “the Lord began to turn” their “captivity.”<sup>3</sup> During their first decade there, which “may well be called the golden decade for the family,” they found “sympathizing friends” who shared their burdens and supplied their needs.<sup>4</sup> In 1856, the Whites moved into their first built and owned house.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a partial description of the meetings and its conclusions, see “The Conference,” *RH*, December 4, 1855, 75; Joseph Bates, J. H. Waggoner, and M. E. Cornell, “Address of the Conference Assembled at Battle Creek, Mich., Nov. 16<sup>th</sup>, 1855,” *RH*, December 4, 1855, 79; Arthur White, *Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant* (1969), 53–54; Ron Graybill, “The Whites Come to Battle Creek: A Turning Point in Adventist History,” *Adventist Heritage* 15.2 (Fall 1992): 25–29. On November 20<sup>th</sup> Ellen White had a vision and then wrote a sixteen-page pamphlet titled the *Testimony for the Church No. 1* (Battle Creek, MI: 1855); *Testimonies*, 1:113–126.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:194–195; idem, *Testimonies*, 1:97–98; Ellen G. White to Reuben and Belinda Loveland, (Lt 2a) January 24, 1856.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:100.

<sup>4</sup> V. Robinson, *James White*, 131; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:100.

By the end of 1855, James's declining health rendered "it inconsistent for him longer to sustain the responsibilities he" had borne.<sup>6</sup> Thus, Uriah Smith was chosen as "resident Editor of the *Advent Review*," and James was acknowledged "for his valuable services as an Editor, in spreading the light of present truth." James then became one of the five "corresponding Editors."<sup>7</sup>

In March 1858, during a visit to Lovett's Grove, Ohio, Ellen White received the vision that became known as the "Great Controversy" vision.<sup>8</sup> She then went back to Battle Creek and spent weeks writing down what she had seen in this vision. By the end of that summer, she published the first book on the subject, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1.<sup>9</sup> The Great Controversy became the subject of the main theological treatise Ellen wrote during her life: the five volumes of the *Conflict of Ages* series, describing and analyzing the history of sin and salvation.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:334; William C. White, "Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: XXX. Early Memories of Our First Home," *RH*, February 13, 1936, 6–7.

<sup>6</sup> Uriah Smith, "To the Friends of the Review," *RH*, December 4, 1855, 76.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Bates and Uriah Smith, "Business proceedings of the Conference at Battle Creek, Mich.," *RH*, December 4, 1855, 76.

<sup>8</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:265–272; William C. White, "Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: XXXI.A View of the Age–Long Conflict," *RH*, February 20, 1936, 5–7; Roger W. Coon, *The Great Visions of Ellen G. White* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1992), 62–74.

<sup>9</sup> James White, "Spiritual Gifts," *RH*, September 9, 1858, 136.

<sup>10</sup> George R. Knight, "Conflict of the Ages Series," in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*.

## Organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

As the Sabbatarian Adventist movement multiplied and spread, James put effort into helping achieve their mission and called for uniting them in a legal organization.<sup>11</sup> Initially, most Sabbatarian Adventists opposed organization, and to implement it was “a hard struggle,” the result of “testimony after testimony” from the Lord and “much study and many prayers for wisdom.”<sup>12</sup> According to Andrew Mustard, after a period of “rudimentary organizational features” (1849–1854), the Sabbatarians were involved in “a time of discussion and controversy over church order” (1854–1860), and finally, during the following three years, the organization was established on both local and general levels.<sup>13</sup>

The main aims of the gospel order among Sabbatarians were initially proposed as checking fanaticism and controlling traveling preachers.<sup>14</sup> As their numbers grew, organization became “indispensable” and “essential.” As Ellen White recalled later, the organization was necessary

To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other

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<sup>11</sup> Andrew Gordon Mustard, “James White and the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Organization, 1844–1881” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1987); idem, *James White and SDA Organization: Historical Development, 1844–1881*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 12 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> Ellen G. White to Brethren of the General Conference, (Lt 32) December 19, 1892; idem, “Dear Brethren of the General Conference,” *GCDB*, January 29, 1893, 24.

<sup>13</sup> Mustard, “James White,” 116; Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 90–95.

<sup>14</sup> James White to Philip and Nancy Collins, September 8, 1849; Mustard, “James White,” 120–122.



objects.<sup>15</sup>

In 1859 the group adopted a plan of Systematic Benevolence as a way to pay the travel expenses and stipends of their itinerant preachers.<sup>16</sup> In 1860, the movement chose the name *Seventh-day Adventist*.<sup>17</sup> In May 1861, they organized the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association.<sup>18</sup> Until then, James White had been the legal owner of the publishing house, and this lifted a great burden from his shoulders.<sup>19</sup> In 1861, the first local conference (Michigan Conference) was also organized.<sup>20</sup> Soon other states followed the pattern, and finally in May 1863 the General Conference of SDAs was established.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ellen G. White to Brethren of the General Conference, (Lt 32) December 19, 1892, quoted in *GCDB*, January 29, 1893, 22; cf. A. G. Daniells, "Organization: A Brief Account of Its History in the Development of the Cause of the Third Angel's Message," *RH*, February 14, 1907, 5.

<sup>16</sup> James White, "Systematic Benevolence," *RH*, February 3, 1859, 84; "An Address," *RH*, February 3, 1859, 84; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:190–195; idem, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:230–238; Brian E. Strayer, "Adventist Tithepaying—The Untold Story," *Spectrum* 17.1 (October 1986):41–44.

<sup>17</sup> "Business Proceedings of the B.C. Conference," *RH*, October 23, 1860, 179; cf. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:223–224.

<sup>18</sup> "Business Proceedings of the B.C. Conference," *RH*, April 30, 1861, 189; In 1860 they voted the constitution for the organization of the Advent Review Publishing Association, but soon they realized that it would not be possible according to the laws of the state of Michigan ("Business Proceedings of the B.C. Conference," *RH*, October 23, 1860, 177–179; A. G. Daniells, "Organization—No. 7," *RH*, March 14, 1907, 6).

<sup>19</sup> James White, "Organization," *RH*, June 19, 1860, 36; idem, "Western Tour," *RH*, October 30, 1860, 188. James was chosen the president of the Publishing Association and editor of the *Review and Herald* ("Meeting of the Association," *RH*, May 28, 1861, 16; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:445).

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Bates and Uriah Smith, "Doings of the Battle Creek Conference, Oct. 5 & 6, 1861," *RH*, October 8, 1861, 148–149.

<sup>21</sup> John Byington and Uriah Smith, "Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists," *RH*, May 26, 1863, 204–205.

## Health Reform Message

Less than two weeks after the organization of the General Conference, on June 5/6, 1863, Ellen received her most comprehensive vision on health reform.<sup>22</sup> As Seventh-day Adventists (at least the majority) overcame tobacco, tea, and coffee, God gave more light regarding health.<sup>23</sup> Roy Graham notes that since they were now institutionally an organized body, “a much more unified approach was possible in the Adventist ranks than had been the case when each church or group had been a unit in itself.”<sup>24</sup> The SDA Church eventually became “a denomination of health and temperance reformers,”<sup>25</sup> advocating that the health message was “one branch of the great work which is to fit a people for the coming of the Lord.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4:120–154. Roger Coon explains, “Although the calendar read June 5, Ellen dated her vision June 6, since it came after the beginning of the Sabbath at sunset. She apparently preferred to emphasize sacred rather than civil time (Coon, *The Great Visions*, 92). It is interesting to note that the vision was not only specific about health issues, but she mentioned several other things she saw on “June 6” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:390–405, 433–437; 449–454; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:20). For a history of the health reform message among the Sabbatarian Adventists, see D. Robinson, *The Story of Our Health Message*; George W. Reid, “The Foundations and Early Development of the Health Emphasis among Seventh-Day Adventists,” ThD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1976; idem, *A Sound of Trumpets: Americans, Adventists, and Health Reform* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982); Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 100–113.

<sup>23</sup> James White, “Western Tour,” *RH*, 8 Nov 1870, 165.

<sup>24</sup> Graham, *Ellen G. White*, 82.

<sup>25</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880), 378; cf. James White, “Health Reform—No. 1,” *HR*, Nov 1870, 91.

<sup>26</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 3:161.

## Facing War Issues

During the early 1860s, the Sabbatarian Adventists faced war for the first time.<sup>27</sup> Months before the beginning of the Civil War, on January 12, 1861, Ellen White received a vision that a “terrible war” was imminent, resulting in great suffering for the nation and thousands of deaths, including family members of those present.<sup>28</sup> In a more comprehensive vision given in August 1861, Ellen saw that God was punishing the “nation for the high crime of slavery.” Asserting that God “has the destiny of the nation in His hands,” Ellen stated that “He will punish the South for the sin of slavery, and the North for so long suffering its overreaching and overbearing influence.”<sup>29</sup> Despite slavery ruining the nation, the war began not with the purpose of eliminating slavery, but “merely to preserve the Union.” Thus, the indifference toward freeing slaves would lead the nation to be “humbled into the dust.”<sup>30</sup>

For several months, the Adventist periodical was silent about the war. Soon, however, they realized that the war would last longer than they thought and that several

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<sup>27</sup> For an overview on the Civil War, its impact in the Adventist movement and the reaction of the church, see William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: The Civil War Crisis,” *RH*, November 26, 1936, 6–7; William C. White, D. E. Robinson, and Arthur L. White, “The Spirit of Prophecy and Military Service” (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Publications, 1956); Roger Guion Davis, “Conscientious Cooperators: The Seventh-day Adventists and Military Service, 1860–1945” (PhD diss., George Washington University, 1970), 45–81; Peter Brock, “When Seventh-day Adventists First Faced War: The Problem of the Civil War,” *Adventist Heritage*, January 1974, 23–27; Ronald D. Graybill, “The Power of Prophecy,” 13–20; Knight, “Adventists at War: 1862–1865,” *AR*, April 4, 1991, 13–15; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:462–475; 2:34–45; Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 95–99; Benjamin J. Baker, “‘I Do Not Mean To Live A Coward or Die A Coward’: An Examination of Ellen G. White’s Lifelong Relationship to Black People” (PhD diss., Howard University, Washington, DC, 2011), 98–193; Lake, *A Nation in God’s Hand*.

<sup>28</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:462–463.

<sup>29</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:264; cf. 1:267; [idem], “Communication from Sister White,” *RH*, August 27, 1861, 100.

<sup>30</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:258–259; cf. 1:255, 266.

thousand people would be needed to fight.<sup>31</sup> Many sermons from non-Adventists and articles from secular newspapers were collected and published in the *Review* to inform church members about the war.<sup>32</sup> Adventists, trying to speak in a contemporary and relevant way, used these subjects to call the attention of readers to warfare in spiritual matters.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, some Adventists requested exemption from the possibility of being drafted.<sup>34</sup> When Congress, in July 1864, restricted the exemption only to conscientious objectors who belonged to a recognized pacifist church, Adventists sought governmental recognition to qualify themselves as noncombatants.<sup>35</sup> In September 1864 they received governmental recognition.<sup>36</sup> The next year, in 1865, the Civil War ended.

## Family

The first decade in Battle Creek (1855–1865) also saw a drastic change in the White family. During this period the Whites grieved the first deaths in their nuclear

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<sup>31</sup> “The War,” *RH*, June 10, 1862, 11–12; from the *Republican Standard*.

<sup>32</sup> From a sermon by F. H. Callagher of Michigan, “The Cause and Cure of the Present Civil War,” *RH*, August 19, 1862, 89–91; From *N. Y. Independent*, “The War,” *RH*, August 5, 1862, 78–79; idem, “A Word to Home Rebels,” *RH*, September 2, 1862, 106–107; From *New York Times*, “The Nation’s Scourge,” *RH*, September 2, 1862, 109; “Proclamation by the President,” *RH*, September 30, 1862, 139.

<sup>33</sup> U. Smith, “Prepare War,” *RH*, August 5, 1862, 76; R. F. Cottrell, “Reporters, Beware!” *RH*, August 5, 1862, 76; U. Smith, “Gleanings by the Way,” *RH*, August 12, 1862, 84; idem, “Our Public Affairs,” *RH*, August 12, 1862, 85; M. H. L., “Thoughts for Perilous Times,” *RH*, September 2, 1862, 110; E. J. Waggoner, “Henceforth Thou Shalt Have Wars,” *RH*, September 2, 1862, 110.

<sup>34</sup> James White, while pastor of the “S. D. Adventist Church” in Battle Creek, signed a letter asking the Army to release William Hall from military service (James White to Gentlemen, October 29, 1862, DF 718a, CAR-AU).

<sup>35</sup> Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Political Movement* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 33.

<sup>36</sup> J. N. Andrews, “Seventh-day Adventists Recognized as Non-Combatants,” *RH*, November 13, 1864, 124.

family. They buried two of their sons: the youngest, John Herbert, who was twelve weeks old, in 1860, and Henry, the oldest in 1863.

The other two sons, James Edson (known as Edson) and William Clarence (known as Willie), lived to adulthood. During the period covered in this chapter the Whites experienced the first conflicts with Edson as he entered adolescence he demonstrated a leaning toward disobedience to his parents, and was reluctant to assume responsibility for his conduct.<sup>37</sup>

The next section will consider the impact of these events/struggles on the personal relationship between James and Ellen White.

## Relationship between James and Ellen White

### The Whites's First House

After seven years of marriage, the Whites had their first experience of living in a house with only their children and their two helpers, Clarissa Bonfoey and Jennie Fraser Fraser.<sup>38</sup>

With the help of friends, James “put up a little one-and-a-half-story cottage,”<sup>39</sup> at a cost of about \$500, and the family lived there from late 1856 to the spring of 1863.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 114.

<sup>38</sup> Ellen gladly penned, “I never took so much comfort with my family as now. Our family has always been so large. But now we only number eight and I can enjoy the company of my children, they can be more under my own watchcare, and I can better train them in the right way” (Ellen G. White to Reuben and Belinda Loveland, [Lt 2a] January 24, 1856). A few months later (May 30) Clarissa Bonfoey died, aged 35 years. This loss was deeply felt by the Whites (James White, “Obituary,” *RH*, June 12, 1856, 55; Ellen G. White to Stockbridge and Louisa Howland, [Lt 1] July 15, 1856).

<sup>39</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:334; William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: XXX. Early Memories of Our First Home,” *RH*, February 13, 1936, 6–7; Wheeler, *James White*, 88–89. The attitude of friends in assisting them in setting a place for their first own house

This first house built and owned by the Whites followed the common pattern of the time, with bedrooms upstairs and the other rooms downstairs. During the years they lived there, James made several additions to the house.<sup>41</sup> Since “the size and appearance of a house announced the social position, aspirations, and ‘character’ of its occupants,” the simplicity of their house showed that they were not rich. It also demonstrated the simple lifestyle they preached.<sup>42</sup>

In February 1863, James purchased a piece of land near the Review office and built a new home. James, “a natural-born entrepreneur,”<sup>43</sup> took advantage of America’s “greatest building boom to date”<sup>44</sup> to invest in buying and selling houses, which on several occasions brought him a good profit and benefited the church when it was in

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shows “a visible token of support,” since it was done right after the November 1855 conference (Tim Poirier, “A Biographical Summary,” in *The Ellen G. White Letters and Manuscripts with Annotations: 1845–1859*, Ellen G. White Estate [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2014], 21.

<sup>40</sup> “The James & Ellen White Wood Street Home,” DF 699, CAR-AU. This home still stands on its original site, where it has been professionally restored as part of the Historic Adventist Village. William notes that a special place of that land was reserved for prayer, “Kindhearted brethren gave their labor and cleared the land, all except a little grove of second growth oak in the northeast corner, which, at father’s request, was left as a place for retirement and prayer” (William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: XXX,” 6).

<sup>41</sup> Stanley D. Hickerson, “The Homes of James and Ellen White,” in “*Ellen White and Current Issues*” *Symposium*, vol. 5 (Berrien Springs, MI: CAR-AU, 2009), 105–106; Stanley D. Hickerson and Michael W. Campbell, “Homes of James and Ellen G. White,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*. More rooms were built to accommodate relatives who came to live with them for a while; the Whites enjoyed the company of their parents (W. C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen White: XXX. Early Memories of Our First Home,” *RH*, February 13, 1936, 6; Ellen G. White, “Diary, July 1 to September 30, 1859,” Ms 7, 1859).

<sup>42</sup> Daniel E. Sutherland, *The Expansion of Everyday Life, 1860–1876* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1989), 27–52. For an analysis of the first Whites home in Battle Creek and how its simplicity was coherent with the message they preached, see Carol A. Nickolai, “The Relevance of Nineteenth-Century Religion to the Archaeological Record: An Example From the Home of Ellen White, Prophetess of Seventh-Day Adventism,” *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 7.2 (June 2003), 145–159.

<sup>43</sup> Alden Thompson, “Finances, Ellen G. White’s,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas J. Schlereth, *Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 1876–1915* (New York, NY: Harper, 1991), 87.

need.<sup>45</sup> Another aspect of their homes later on was making room to help others. Their grandson, Arthur White wrote, “While specific records are meager and unclear, the family was often swollen by orphans and others in need of help, particularly young people seeking an education.”<sup>46</sup>

### Separate Bedrooms

The Whites gradually modified the house to better meet their needs. Since James was a busy man during the day, he needed a good night’s sleep, while Ellen woke up during the night or early morning to write. This left them with no better option than to sleep in separate rooms to accommodate their life. Apparently it had nothing to do with relational problems,<sup>47</sup> nor was it a general custom of the time (although some followed this custom in the Victorian age);<sup>48</sup> it was just an adjustment for a more efficient and

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<sup>45</sup> Wheeler, *James White*, 92–98; Hickerson, “The Homes of James and Ellen White.”

<sup>46</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:92. In 1906 Ellen said, “After my marriage I was instructed that I must show a special interest in motherless and fatherless children, taking some under my own charge for a time, and then finding homes for them” (Ellen G. White, “A Messenger,” *RH*, July 26, 1906, 8).

<sup>47</sup> Ellen once wrote, “You [James] may be assured I miss your little visits in my room” (Ellen G. White to James White, [Lt 10] October 12, 1860; quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:426). The Whites also used to spend time talking during the nights before sleeping (Ellen G. White, “Christ and the Law,” Ms 5, June 19, 1889). Though the Whites lived and worked in a time “of great restraint toward speaking publicly or writing of sex and the sexual relationship between husbands and wives,” Ellen, “an ardent advocate of a high standard of purity and holiness,” condemned “extreme positions in the matter of the relation of husbands and wives.” In her thoughts about the “privilege of the marriage relation” she always condemned both extremes: [1] “sexual excess” or [2] a life of continence in order to reach a higher spiritual level. She pleaded for a moderate course as appropriate for the Christian believer (Arthur L. White, “Ellen G. White and Marriage Relations,” *Ministry*, March 1969, 6–8, 26–27; idem, “Ellen G. White and Marriage Relations,” *Ministry*, April 1969, 19–21, 23). For a brief presentation of Ellen’s views on marriage and sexual relationship see, Miroslav M. Kiš, “Sexuality,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*; Ingemar Lindén, *The Last Trump: An Historico-genetical Study of Some Important Chapters in the Making and Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1978), 270–278.

<sup>48</sup> Judith Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England*, reprint ed. (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2004; originally published in Great Britain under the title *The Victorian House: Domestic Life from Childbirth to Deathbed* [London: Harper Collins, 2003]), 38. “Our research suggests that the idealized separation of male and female spaces may not have been fully

industrious life from both sides, and seemed never to be a problem in their minds, as they continued to follow this pattern in other homes they owned.<sup>49</sup>

## Handling Differences

### Time to Commence the Sabbath

When Adventist Sabbatarians accepted the seventh-day Sabbath, they assumed, led by Bates's argument, that the Sabbath commenced at six o'clock on Friday and ended at the same time on Saturday.<sup>50</sup> When this theory was "called in question," Bates continued to support his six o'clock argument.<sup>51</sup> James White and John Andrews backed up the idea.<sup>52</sup> However, James confessed that he had "never been fully satisfied with the testimony presented in favor of six o'clock," and though the subject troubled him, he had

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actualized in southwest Michigan. . . . It appears that the spaces in the Whites's home were also sexually integrated, although Ellen White apparently did her writing, sewing, and other domestic activities in her own bed chamber—separate from her husband's—on the second story (Stan Hickerson, personal communication, 2000)." (Michael S. Nassaney, Deborah L. Rotman, Daniel O. Sayers and Carol A. Nickolai, "The Southwest Michigan Historic Landscape Project: Exploring Class, Gender, and Ethnicity From the Ground Up," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 5.3 (September 2001), 251–252.

<sup>49</sup> Wheeler, *James White*, 90.

<sup>50</sup> Bates, *The Seventh-day Sabbath* (1846), 32–37, 42–43; Knight, *Joseph Bates*, 158. Bates was well respected for "his godly life" and being "the first to teach the Sabbath in its importance, and faithfully labor to bring out a people from among the Adventists to observe it" (James White, "Time to Commence the Sabbath," *RH*, February 25, 1868, 168).

<sup>51</sup> James White, "Time to Commence the Sabbath," *RH*, February 25, 1868, 168; Bates, *A Vindication of the Seventh-day Sabbath and the Commandments of God: With a Further History of God's Peculiar People from 1847–1848* (New Bedford [MA]: Benjamin Lindsey, 1848), 198–200; Bates, *A Seal of the Living God*, 38; Bates, "Time to Commence the Holy Sabbath," *RH*, April 21, 1851, 71; reprinted, Bates, "Time to Commence the Holy Sabbath," *RH*, May 26, 1853, 4–5; Knight, *Joseph Bates*, 158.

<sup>52</sup> James White to Stockbridge Howland, July 2, 1848; cf. James White, "Time to Commence the Sabbath," *RH*, February 25, 1868, 168; John N. Andrews, "The Time of the Sabbath," *RH*, June 2, 1851, 92–93.



“never found time to thoroughly investigate it.”<sup>53</sup> After questions arose on the subject, James asked Andrews to do an extensive Bible study on the theme.

Andrews researched the Bible text and concluded that the Bible evidenced the sunset-to-sunset time for the Sabbath instead of the six o’clock view.<sup>54</sup> The conclusions were presented to the church in Battle Creek, and almost all were convinced by Andrews’s scriptural investigation, except Bates and Ellen White. While James was fully convinced by Andrews, Ellen needed a vision to correct her.<sup>55</sup> There was no evidence of fighting or disrespect because of that. Another important point is that though James fully believed in the prophetic ministry of his wife, he was ready to check her visions and beliefs according to the Bible and not the other way around. Since the Bible had convinced James, he did not lean toward his wife’s and Bates’s position regarding this subject. For him, the Bible was the last word. This shows that the Whites respected each other, but their rule of faith was the Bible, according to how they understood it. They also showed independence of thought and respect for each other’s opinion. In the end, Ellen was also convinced, and they united in defending the same position.

James had a balanced view regarding how to use spiritual gifts in the church and their relationship toward the Bible. For him it was clear that “[t]he sacred Scriptures are given us as the rule of faith and duty, and we are commanded to search them.” After a deep study on biblical matters, if “some were in danger of being out of harmony with the body” or if there was a failure to understand and obey “the truths in consequence of not

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<sup>53</sup> James White, “Time of the Sabbath,” *RH*, December 4, 1855, 78.

<sup>54</sup> J. N. A[ndrews], “Time for Commencing the Sabbath,” *RH*, December 4, 1855, 76–78.

<sup>55</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:323; [U. Smith], “Not Satisfactory,” *RH*, August 30, 1864, 109.

searching the Scriptures” as they should, “or a want of consecration and spiritual discernment,” then God in His mercy and in His own time “to magnify His goodness” would use the gifts to correct and guide people in the right direction, back to the Bible.<sup>56</sup>

## James and Ellen on the Prophetic Gift

### James and the Spiritual Gifts

During the period discussed in this chapter, the Sabbatarians began facing objections concerning the gift of prophecy raised by “people within their midst.”<sup>57</sup> By 1856, the Sabbatarians “felt a more pressing need to develop a theology of prophetic gifts and to integrate that concept into their entire theological package.”<sup>58</sup>

James never wavered from his position that the primary purpose of true visions was to lead one to God and His written word.<sup>59</sup> However, the fact that his wife was the recipient of the visions put him in an uncomfortable position, leading him to be “slow to speak of Mrs. White’s visions in a public manner.” “[M]y relation to the instrument of the Lord’s choice,” stated James, was “sufficient excuse for my silence. My position was one of trial.”<sup>60</sup> As the leading voice in the main Sabbatarian periodical, James wrote articles on the spiritual gifts but did not mention his wife. However, the “almost utter

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<sup>56</sup> James White, “Time to Commence the Sabbath,” *RH*, February 25, 1868, 168; cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:325–330; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:119; James White, *Life Incidents*, 326.

<sup>57</sup> Levterov, “The Development,” 96. For a comprehensive analysis of the opposing views and the Sabbatarian Adventist responses about Ellen White’s prophetic gift during 1851 to 1881, see Levterov, “The Development,” 80–260.

<sup>58</sup> Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 85.

<sup>59</sup> James White, *WLF*, 13.

<sup>60</sup> James White, “Note,” *RH*, February 14, 1856, 158.

silence” of those who should present the biblical view on the issue and defend the prophetic gift in the life of Ellen White forced James to feel “compelled to speak.” Though James highly esteemed the visions as the work of “the Holy Spirit in its diversities of operations,” he explicitly stated that it was “a bold untruth” to say that Sabbatarians were “testing all men by the visions, and . . . making them the rule of” their faith.<sup>61</sup> When someone spread news that Ellen had a vision and declared that all “must believe her visions or be lost,” James promptly printed the letter in the *Review* and clarified the issue, affirming that this statement could be “regarded in no other light than a willful falsehood,” as attested by those who were present in the room at the time of the vision.<sup>62</sup>

The theme of the prophetic gift was also on the agendas of several conferences held in Battle Creek, where the Sabbatarians aimed “to show that they did not need to be ashamed of believing in Ellen White’s prophetic gift and acknowledging it publicly.”<sup>63</sup>

During this period, James authored several articles on “the role of the spirit of prophecy and the work of Ellen G. White in the church” and demonstrated from the Bible

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<sup>61</sup> James White, “Note,” *RH*, February 14, 1856, 158; cf. James White, “A Test,” *RH*, October 16, 1855, 61.

<sup>62</sup> James White, “Western Tour,” *RH*, September 9, 1858, 132.

<sup>63</sup> Levterov, “The Development,” 127; cf. 127–134. See Joseph Bates, J. H. Waggoner, and M. E. Cornell, “Address of the Conference Assembled at Battle Creek, Mich., Nov. 16th, 1855,” *RH*, December 4, 1855, 79; “Business Proceedings of the Conference at Battle Creek, Mich.,” *RH*, December 4, 1855, 76; “Conference Address,” *RH*, July 24, 1856, 94; J[ames] W[hite], “Conference,” *RH*, November 12, 1857, 4; idem, “Testimony for the Church,” *RH*, November 26, 1857, 18; idem, untitled note, *RH*, December 10, 1857, 40; “The Conference,” *RH*, June 9, 1859, 20 (“About an hour [in the last day of meetings] was occupied by Bro. White in speaking upon the Gifts and Unity of the church”); Joseph Bates and Uriah Smith, “Business Proceedings of the General Conference of June 3–6, 1859,” *RH*, June 9, 1859, 20–21; [James White], “Doing of the Battle Creek Conference, Oct. 5 & 6, 1861,” *RH*, October 8, 1861, 148.

“the perpetuity of the prophetic gift beyond the time of the New Testament, and that the remnant church of the last days, in particular, would possess this gift.”<sup>64</sup>

Another aspect of the visions that James stressed was how they kept the Sabbatarian movement united. Other dissident groups, such as the *Messenger* party, had “crumbled and disappeared,” but the Sabbatarian movement had prospered,<sup>65</sup> and those among the Sabbatarians who because of “blind prejudice” had opposed “the gifts” were suffering divisions.<sup>66</sup> Usually James wrote about the gifts without mentioning his wife’s name, but when E. Burbee from Iowa asked a direct question about what evidence someone could have if Ellen was strange to the person, James gave a direct answer. After presenting the biblical evidence of the gift of prophecy in the remnant church and appealing to one of the tests of the true prophet, “A tree is known by its fruit” (Luke 6:44; Matt 7:15–20), James appealed to the evidence of Ellen’s life and the testimony of those who were acquainted with her.

It is now almost seventeen years since she had her first vision. Much of this time she has traveled and publicly taught the things shown her of the Lord, to the great comfort of the humble and desponding. She has delivered a vast amount of

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<sup>64</sup> Mustard, “James White,” 131–132, cf. 130–134; J[ames] W[hite], “The Testimony of Jesus,” *RH*, December 18, 1855, 92–93; idem, “The Word,” February 7, 1856, 148–149; idem, “Unity and Gifts of the Church. No. 1,” *RH*, December 3, 1857, 29; idem, “Unity and Gifts of the Church. No. 2,” *RH*, December 10, 1857, 37; idem, introductory note in E. G. W[hite], “The Future” *RH*, December 31, 1857, 59; idem, “Unity and Gifts of the Church. No. 3,” *RH*, December 31, 1857, 60–61; idem, “Unity and Gifts of the Church. No. 4,” *RH*, January 7, 1858, 68–69; [idem], “Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts,” *RH*, February 4, 1862, 76–77; [idem], “Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts,” *RH*, February 11, 1862, 84; [idem], “Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts,” *RH*, February 18, 1862, 92–93; [idem], “Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts,” *RH*, February 25, 1862, 100; [idem], “Palsshaw, Mich.,” *RH*, August 23, 1864, 100. He also wrote the introduction of a book on the subject, J[ames] W[hite], “Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts,” in M[erritt] E. Cornell, *Miraculous Powers: The Scripture Testimony on the Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1862), 11–29.

<sup>65</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “A Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Present Truth,” *RH*, January 14, 1858, 77–78; [U. Smith], “Origin and History of the Third Angel’s Message.—No. 8,” *RH*, January 27, 1891, 56.

<sup>66</sup> James White, “The Cause,” *RH*, May 20, 1862, 196.

testimonies of reproof, alike to friends and foes, endangering herself to the cold neglect of the former, and the abuse and slander of the latter. Thus she has stood before the world near seventeen years. Her visions have stood the most rigid test of criticism. At one time a periodical was gotten up, and for about one year was devoted to the effort of crushing the visions. This resulted in a thorough examination of their merits, and in placing them where they had ten-fold their former influence. Their tendency is to lead the mind to a clearer understanding of the word of God, to bring down the vain and the proud, and lift up and comfort the weak and desponding, to unite the people of God, and lead them to a preparation for the coming of the Son of Man. ... Mrs. W. has traveled and borne her testimony in Maine, N. H., Mass., Ct., Vt., C. E., N. Y., Pa., Ohio, Mich., Ills., Wis., and Iowa, and why so many in the wide field of her labors firmly believe that she is sent of God to accomplish a work in his cause, is because they have evidence.<sup>67</sup>

He finished by appealing to the good sense of the questioner: "Faith without evidence is valueless. Unbelief, where there is evidence, is a wrong. We hope the writer will see good evidence, and believe."<sup>68</sup>

#### Ellen and Her Prophetic Gift

Ellen shared her husband's opinion on the issue. In the first part of the 1850s, when James decided not to publish Ellen's visions in the *Review*, it "led many individuals to doubt her prophetic gift and its usefulness."<sup>69</sup> This attitude of some Sabbatarians "discouraged" Ellen, as she saw a disregard for the heavenly messages. It also raised doubts in Ellen's mind about the continuation of her ministry. As the visions became "less and less frequent," she penned in 1856, "I have thought that my work in God's cause was done, and that I had no further duty to do, but to save my own soul, and carefully attend to my little family; have a good influence over my children, pray with

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<sup>67</sup> Editor, "Answers," *RH*, February 4, 1862, 77.

<sup>68</sup> Editor, "Answers," *RH*, February 4, 1862, 77.

<sup>69</sup> Levterov, "The Development," 140.

them, and for them, that they may be saved.”<sup>70</sup> The decision of the Sabbatarians in November of 1855 concerning the visions gave a new perspective on the issue.<sup>71</sup>

Ellen stated,

At our late Conference at Battle Creek, in Nov. God wrought for its. The minds of the servants of God were exercised as to the gifts of the Church, and if God’s frown had been brought upon his people because the gifts had been slighted and neglected, there was a pleasing prospect that his smiles would again be upon us, and he would graciously and mercifully revive the gifts again, and they would live in the Church, to encourage the desponding and fainting soul, and to correct and reprove the erring.<sup>72</sup>

Ellen considered her gift a means of bringing unity to the church as she fought against fanaticism and doctrinal errors.<sup>73</sup> She also demonstrated the right attitude concerning her gift and visions in relation to the test of fellowship.<sup>74</sup> Recognizing that the false visions and fanaticism abounding at that time brought confusion to some, she advised patience with those who needed more time to test her visions. But she was clear that for those who knew nothing about her gift, but fought against it and opposed those who had been comforted by it, “the church may know that they are not right.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ellen G. White, “Communication from Sister White,” *RH*, January 10, 1856, 118.

<sup>71</sup> Affirming that they never exalted “the gifts or their manifestations, above the Bible,” they, nevertheless, confessed their negligence in listening to the messages (Joseph Bates, J. H. Waggoner, and M. E. Cornell, “Address of the Conference Assembled at Battle Creek, Mich., Nov. 16<sup>th</sup>, 1855,” *RH*, December 4, 1856, 78).

<sup>72</sup> Ellen G. White, “Communication from Sister White,” *RH*, January 10, 1856, 118.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:181–182; idem, *Testimonies*, 1:116–118, 122–123, 324; Ellen G. White to Harriet Stevens, (Lt 2) August, 1855.

<sup>74</sup> Levterov, “The Development,” 144–146.

<sup>75</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:327–329 (1862); cf. 382–384 (1863); U. S[mith], “The Visions a Test,” *RH*, January 14, 1862, 52–53; Ellen G. White, “The Cause in Wisconsin,” Ms 3, 1862; Ellen G. White to Friends at Hanover, (Lt 12) February 18, 1863; Knight, *Meeting Ellen White: A Fresh Look at Her Life, Writings, and Major Themes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996), 36–37; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 24–31.

At the beginning of the 1860s, Ellen began addressing some theological issues related to her gift, instead of staying in the practical realm.<sup>76</sup> In a letter to John Andrews, Ellen White made some conclusive references to the visions, their source, and their purpose. According to her, the visions were from God, and intended to correct His people. God also was in charge of both the revelation and the transmission in order to save it from corruption. “God gives the message,” stated Ellen, “and then takes especial care that it is not corrupted. . . . I am just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision, as in having the vision.”<sup>77</sup>

James and Ellen accepted the biblical doctrine of the spiritual gifts and the manifestation in the remnant church of the prophetic gift in the person of Ellen White. They also agreed on the purpose of the visions, the right way to use them, and their relation to the Scriptures. James tended to be cautious when he spoke publicly on the visions because his wife was involved, but he never doubted her gift, and used his pen and influence to draw attention to the biblical concept of the spiritual gifts and the need for them in the last days. Their relationship as a couple improved as they worked together and believed that God was using them to help people grow in their understanding of the Bible. They believed that God used the visions to unite the Sabbatarian movement; when they saw the growth of several anti-visions, which basically meant opposition to the leadership of James and Ellen, they grew closer to fight this opposition, which included

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<sup>76</sup> Levterov, “The Development,” 135, 140–146.

<sup>77</sup> Ellen G. White to John N. Andrews, (Lt 8) June 11, 1860, 17, 19.

fighting wrong feelings, fanaticism, and biblical errors.<sup>78</sup> As they defended themselves and each other they were put in a closer commitment to each other.

### Relationship with the Family

James and Ellen often had the privilege of traveling together. However, when it was not possible, their letters to each other show that they missed one another very much. In her diary while traveling alone during the winter of 1859, Ellen wrote, “I have felt so homesick on the journey.”<sup>79</sup> She thought that their “labors should be together.”<sup>80</sup> It was so hard for her that she confessed, “I fear that I have not been willing to sacrifice the company of my husband and children to do others good.”<sup>81</sup> When she returned she gladly recognized, “There is no place to be so dearly prized as home,” because there she could have “the society of my husband and children.”<sup>82</sup> Once when James was out, she affectionately penned one of the most important sentences to define their intimate relationship in those days: “*You may be assured I miss your little visits in my room, but*

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<sup>78</sup> James and Ellen suffered verbal persecution or were presented in a false way by non-SDAs. They as well as the SDA movement in general were accused and presented as Mormons (Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2: iv; cf. *Clerical Slander* [Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1864]; note, *RH*, May 31, 1864, 8; D. H. Lamson, “More Clerical Slander,” *RH*, August 13, 1872, 69). The Whites also were charged of following delusion and fanaticism (cf. James White, “Clerical Slander: Ascension Robes and the Like,” *RH*, April 14, 1868, 280 [talks about an experience with Ellen in 1847]); and Ellen was accused of having false visions (M. E. Cornell, “Report,” *RH*, April 28, 1868, 313; James White, “Clerical Slander,” *RH*, February 23, 1869, 72).

<sup>79</sup> Ellen G. White, “Diary,” January 21, Ms 5, 1859.

<sup>80</sup> Idem, “Diary,” January 20, in Ms 5, 1859.

<sup>81</sup> Idem, “Diary,” January 21, in Ms 5, 1859.

<sup>82</sup> Idem, “Diary,” January 26–27, in Ms 5, 1859.



the thought you are doing the will of God, helps me to bear the *loss of your company*. ... In much love from your Ellen” (emphasis added).<sup>83</sup>

Ellen knew that James shared her desire to be at home together. So, she wrote, “It looks like a long, long time before you return home, but we know you will feel as anxious to get home as we are to have you.”<sup>84</sup> While he was away, James’s place “at the dining-room table [was] vacant.”<sup>85</sup> On another occasion she wrote lovingly, “Dear husband, the time of your absence is nearly ended. One week more brings you home. We shall all be rejoiced to see you home again. ... Yours in much love.”<sup>86</sup> And when James had the chance to surprise Ellen she greatly appreciated that. “At noon my husband came unexpectedly,” wrote Ellen, “I was very glad to see him. My prayers have been for him, morning and night, that God would be with him and return him to us again safely.”<sup>87</sup>

James also freely expressed his feelings. “I want to see you [Ellen] and the children very much,”<sup>88</sup> he wrote, and on another occasion, “I love my family and nothing but a sense of duty can separate me from them.”<sup>89</sup> At the same time he penned, “I begin

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<sup>83</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 10) October 12, 1860.

<sup>84</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 11) October 22, 1860.

<sup>85</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 12a) October 1860.

<sup>86</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 14) November 19, 1860.

<sup>87</sup> Ellen G. White, “Diary,” May 23, Ms 6, 1859.

<sup>88</sup> James White to Ellen G. White, October 29, 1860.

<sup>89</sup> James White to Ellen G. White, November 1, 1860; quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:427.

to want to see you very much.” And he worried that she was well cared for while he was away: “Be careful of your health. Do not want for anything that money will buy.”<sup>90</sup>

Though Ellen was a busy woman, she recognized that her husband also was a man with lots to do, and as James was a great help for Ellen, she also used to assist him at the office during her free time.<sup>91</sup> While home Ellen aimed to make it “the pleasantest place of any to them.”<sup>92</sup>

Their family seems to have been the picture of what Ellen wrote in 1862:

The husband should manifest great interest in his family. Especially should he be very tender of the feelings of a feeble wife. He can shut the door against much disease. Kind, cheerful, and encouraging words will prove more effective than the most healing medicines. These will bring courage to the heart of the desponding and discouraged, and the happiness and sunshine brought into the family by kind acts and encouraging words will repay the effort tenfold.<sup>93</sup>

There is no intention here to present a perfect home free of any trouble, but as the previous paragraphs show, James and Ellen missed each other while not together, and tried to make their home as happy as they could for each other. The number of letters they wrote shows a couple that loved to interact as much as they could. Letters cost time to write and money to mail, but it seems that their love and need to hear from each other outweighed the cost and effort their letters required. These letters are not full of romantic expressions, sometimes only based on feelings, but carry a deep level of caring which

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<sup>90</sup> James White to Ellen G. White, October 22, 1860; cf. James White to Ellen G. White, November 6, 1860.

<sup>91</sup> Ellen G. White, “Diary” [January 1–March 31], Ms 5, 1859, see entries from January 5 and March 31; idem, “Diary” [July 1–September 30], Ms 7, 1859.

<sup>92</sup> Ellen G. White, “Diary,” April 11, Ms 6, 1859.

<sup>93</sup> Ellen G. White, “Testimony for the Church,” *RH*, April 22, 1862, 163; Ellen G. White, *Testimony No. 8*, 1862, “Family Religion”; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:306.

points to a healthy relationship. This longing to be together reveals a great sense of attachment, which is an important factor in a functional family.<sup>94</sup>

### The Children

The Whites loved their children. This can be seen throughout the letters they sent to each other, although their busy schedules forced them to spend little time with their children. Although Ellen White wrote in the 1850s, “The greatest sacrifice I was called to make in connection with the work was to leave my children to the care of others,” she nevertheless admitted that she “had not allowed affection of my loved babes to hold me back from performing my duty as God required.”<sup>95</sup> James shared the same affection. He penned in 1860, “I love my family and nothing but a sense of duty can separate me from them.”<sup>96</sup>

The Whites’s greatest concern about their sons was for their salvation.<sup>97</sup> In their regular routine, worship time at home with the children was taken seriously. Willie, their third son, recalling the family daily program, said they all “assembled in the parlor for morning worship” at seven o’clock. During the worship James “would read an appropriate scripture, with comments, and then lead in the morning song of praise or supplication.” After the song was “sung with hearty vigor,” James prayed. This was a special moment. Willie wrote, “He did not ‘offer a prayer;’ he prayed with earnestness

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<sup>94</sup> Garland, *Family Ministry*, 199–200.

<sup>95</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:101, 581

<sup>96</sup> James White to Ellen G. White, November 1, 1860.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Ellen G. White to Henry White, J. Edson White and William C. White, (Lt 23) September 20, 1859.

and with solemn reverence. He pleaded for those blessings most needed by himself and his family, and for the prosperity of the cause of God.” The “atmosphere of reverence and prayer” of the moment “deeply impressed” all “with the seriousness and solemnity of the occasion.” The children “always regarded this hour with solemn seriousness.” When James was away from home, Ellen “conducted the family worship,” and “if both were out, the one in charge of the home led out.” James and Ellen led the evening worship, when they were present; Ellen usually “read some interesting and instructive article from religious papers or books,” and James followed by reading a chapter from the Bible and praying.<sup>98</sup>

The daily worship following the family breakfast was an important aspect of the White family. Studies done by sociologists have pointed out that “daily family meal is the primary means for sustaining family life,” because “mealtime is often the only time the whole family is gathered in one place.”<sup>99</sup> In the Whites’s home, “The worship hour was as regularly observed as the hours for breakfast and dinner.”<sup>100</sup> Everyday rituals are significant to communicate a family’s values.<sup>101</sup>

James, when gone, often asked Ellen to remember him “affectionately” to the boys and remind them that he was praying for them.<sup>102</sup> He tenderly wrote to his wife, “I hope our dear boys will seek to be good and right. Language cannot describe my anxiety

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<sup>98</sup> William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: XXX,” 7.

<sup>99</sup> Garland, *Family Ministry*, 196.

<sup>100</sup> William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: XXX,” 7.

<sup>101</sup> Garland, *Family Ministry*, 307.

<sup>102</sup> James White to Ellen G. White, October 11, 1860; James White to Ellen G. White, October 31, 1860.

for their welfare and future salvation. Hope they will seek to love one another, and to love and serve God.”<sup>103</sup>

Ellen used to point out her sons’s responsibilities using strong words to draw their attention. In one letter she wrote, “Their [her sons’s] eternal interest is a great weight and burden to me. O will the Lord save my children, my poor children? I have no evidence [that] if Henry or Edson should now die that they would come up in the first resurrection. I carry a burdened heart for them all the time.”<sup>104</sup> On another occasion she penned,

We hope you will be good and faithful children. I have been thinking, what if either of you should be taken sick and die, and your father and mother see you no more? Would you be prepared to die? Do you love God better than any one else? Can you forget your play to think of God, to go away alone and ask him for Jesus’ sake to forgive your sins? ... God loves honest-hearted, truthful children, but cannot love those who are dishonest. ... Many times I ask myself the question, Will my dear children be saved in the kingdom? I cannot bear the thought of their being shut out of the City with the wicked. I love my children, but God says that only the good and holy can be saved. ... You cannot be good, or do right, in your own strength. You must go to God and ask him for strength. Ask him that his grace may influence your hearts, and make you right.<sup>105</sup>

The reason for these warnings was love: “We your father and mother,” penned Ellen, “feel a deep interest in you. You may sometimes think that your parents are too strict, that they watch you too closely; but, dear boys, our love for you is too great. We

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<sup>103</sup> James White to Ellen G. White, October 29, 1860.

<sup>104</sup> Ellen. G. White to Harriet Stevens, (Lt 12) January 30, 1857.

<sup>105</sup> Ellen G. White to Henry White and J. Edson White, (Lt 3) March 2, 1858, 1. Published in entirety in *An Appeal to the Youth. Funeral Address of Henry N. White, at Battle Creek, Mich., Dec. 21 1868, Who Died at Topsham, Maine, Dec. 8<sup>th</sup>; Also a Brief Narrative of His Life, Experience and Last Sickness, His Mother’s Letters, etc* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1864), 42–44. For some viewpoints on understanding these strong sentences from Ellen White to children, such as “God ... cannot love those who are dishonest,” or “wicked children God does not love” (Ellen G. White to William C. White, March 14, 1860, in *An Appeal to the Youth*, 61), see Douglass, *Messenger to the Lord*, 59, 61nt40; Poirier, gen. ed., *The Ellen G. White Letters and Manuscripts*, 404–405nt19); Alden Thompson, *Escape from the Flames: How Ellen White Grew from Fear to Joy— And Helped Me Do It Too* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 146–149; Moon, “William Clarence White,” 39–41; idem, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 39–41.

have dedicated you to God.”<sup>106</sup> Her letters to those who cared for the boys while they were traveling had the same tone: “Lucinda ... [d]on’t try to do too much, I beg of you. Take good care of the children. ... Don’t tax your strength too much, but care above all things for the eternal interest of my boys.”<sup>107</sup>

Ellen carried a burden not only for the salvation of her own children but also for that of the young in general, and with a motherly pen she wrote several articles to the *Youth’s Instructor* during that time to wake up and prepare the youth.<sup>108</sup> At a time when the American nation valued parenting as a way of preparing children to be good citizens for the American republic, the Whites looked for a “higher purpose,” to “raise children ... for the heavenly society.”<sup>109</sup>

In general, the Whites spoke positively of their children. Ellen knew that her boys had their problems, so she often commended them: “You have been very kind, obedient children to us. Sometimes wayward, but not stubborn.”<sup>110</sup> Once she was home with the children while James was out and wrote, “The children are well and obedient. ... The

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<sup>106</sup> Ellen G. White to Henry White, J. Edson White, and William C. White, (Lt 7) August 1861.

<sup>107</sup> Ellen G. White to Friends at Home, (Lt 1) January 12, 1863.

<sup>108</sup> See for example, Ellen G. White, “Exhortation to the Young,” *YI*, January 1854, 5–6; idem, “He Will Come Again,” *YI*, April 1854, 28–29; idem, “To the Young,” *YI*, May 1854, 37–38; idem, “Watch and Pray,” *YI*, October 1855, 81; idem, “Watch and Pray,” March 1856, 21.

<sup>109</sup> Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press), 172.

<sup>110</sup> Ellen G. White to Henry White, J. Edson White, and William C. White, (Lt 21) March 25, 1861.

children are doing well; are quite steady; are not perfect. This we do not expect of children.”<sup>111</sup>

The Whites’s responsibilities made them spend a lot of time traveling and far from home, but they always clearly expressed their joy in returning home. Their relationship was well described by Adelia Patten:

The affectionate parents have often felt grieved that their pilgrim life has obliged them to be absent from their children so much. And while at home it has ever been their aim to educate them for usefulness, and to bring them up in the fear of the Lord. When away, the children have received by letter numerous tokens of the anxiety of their parents for their welfare, urging them to adhere to correct principles, and instructing them how to form characters, not only for this life, but for the life to come.<sup>112</sup>

The Whites’s attitude of care and guidance toward their children was well summarized by Ellen in a letter to Henry and Edson in 1859: “We do not wish to drive you, dear boys,” penned Ellen, “but help you to do right. We love you. No others can love you as we do.”<sup>113</sup>

#### James Trusts in Ellen’s Attitude Regarding Familial Matters

Ellen White was a woman who grew in her attitude with perseverance and initiative, and James not only allowed room for this growth, but respected her manner of dealing with the situations. A clear example happened in 1856, when Ellen revived her drowned baby, William. He was twenty months old and drowned when he was “playing

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<sup>111</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 11) October 22, 1860; cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:426–427.

<sup>112</sup> Adelia P. Patten, “Brief Narrative of the Life, Experience and Last Sickness of Henry N. White,” in *An Appeal to the Youth*, 18; quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 62.

<sup>113</sup> Ellen G. White to Henry White and J. Edson White, (Lt 26) October 30, 1859; the letter was published in *An Appeal to the Youth*, 53–56.

boat with a wooden pail ... in a large tub of water ... in the kitchen.”<sup>114</sup> Jennie Fraser brought the drowned Willie to Ellen, and she immediately “put Willie on the lawn, cut the wet clothes from his body, and then rolled him on the grass as the sudsy water gurgled from his nose and mouth.” When James arrived, he saw the situation and when an onlooker asked him to take the “dead” baby from her arms, James answered, “No. It is her child, and no one shall take it away from her.” After about twenty minutes, Ellen “saw a little flicker of an eyelid and a little puckering of [Willie’s] lips.” She brought him to his “wicker crib” and wrapped him “in warm cloths frequently changed to impart maximum heat to the body of the recovering child.”<sup>115</sup> He survived thanks to the initiative and perseverance of his mother who “stood over him for three-quarters of an hour, working for that little one whose life was trembling in the balance.”<sup>116</sup>

### Death in the Family

“The worst catastrophe to befall families is the loss of a member,” claims Garland, as “the loss of a member cuts to the heart of the family’s attachments and sense of itself.”<sup>117</sup> In the early 1860s the Whites suffered the loss of two of their sons: John Herbert in December 1860, at three months old, and Henry Nichols in 1863, at the age of sixteen. The birth of John Herbert brought joy to the family, but when he died scarcely

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<sup>114</sup> William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: XXVI. The Conference of 1856,” *RH*, January 9, 1936, 8.

<sup>115</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:337; cf. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:207–208.

<sup>116</sup> Ellen G. White, “Co-laborers with Christ,” *ST*, December 3, 1885, 721.

<sup>117</sup> Garland, *Family Ministry*, 273.



three months later, their “home seemed lonely.”<sup>118</sup> Three years later, the death of their oldest son, Henry, was felt deeply by the family.

A few months before Henry’s death, the Whites were distressed by the enthusiasm their oldest boys, Henry and Edson, showed for the Civil War.<sup>119</sup> According to Arthur White, there were two sources of distress: their fascination “with the war activities” and that the boys were “losing the consecration they had enjoyed at the time of their baptism at the turn of the year.”<sup>120</sup> Just a few days before Henry got sick and died, Ellen kindly asked whether Henry had forgotten his parents. “We found quite a number of letters here—two from Edson, two or three from Adelia—but I was sorry to see none from my oldest son. Has he forgotten his parents?”<sup>121</sup> Henry was probably showing the

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<sup>118</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:296; idem, *Testimonies*, 1:246.

<sup>119</sup> William recalling that period several years later wrote, “My brothers went as far as they could in supplying themselves with warlike instruments. They built good bows and arrows with which they shot troublesome birds. They were good whistlers, but wanted a drum, so they bought two cheese boxes, knocking out the heads, putting the rims together, paper inside and out. They secured a sheepskin, took the wool off, and made rawhide heads” (DF 780a, “Pioneer Days Are Recalled,” *Battle Creek Enquirer*, Oct. 30, 1932, quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:59). The attitude of Henry and Edson was common during the time of War. Besides some young people “on the front lines ... Yet far from the battlefield, the war made itself felt. It proved impossible to insulate children and youth from the war’s impact. Boys played soldiers, and girls, nurses. ... Schoolbooks, children’s literature, parades, panoramas, and fairs made the war a part of everyday life ... emphasizing the themes of patriotism, duty, and sacrifice” (Steven Mintz, “Foreword,” in *Children and Youth during the Civil War Era*, ed. James Marten [New York, NY: New York University Press, 2012], x).

<sup>120</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:60. Henry and Edson were baptized on Sabbath, January 3, 1863 ([James White], “Our Protracted Meeting,” *RH*, January 6, 1863, 48; James White, “Report from Brother White, No. 4,” *RH*, February 5, 1867, 102). Henry Nichols (b. August 26, 1847) was 15, and Edson (b. July 28, 1849) was 13. William Clarence (August 29, 1854) was 8, but was not baptized. Willie was baptized in the spring of 1867 [June 30] (James White, “Report from Bro. White,” *RH*, July 9, 1867, 56), even though his biographical information says “1868” (William C. White, “Biographical Information Blank,” April 4, 1934, DF 780, CAR-AU).

<sup>121</sup> Ellen G. White to Henry White, J. Edson White, and William C. White, (Lt 7) November 5, 1863.

common tendency of teenagers seeking independence to distance themselves from their parents.<sup>122</sup>

During his last days, Henry became closer to his parents and repented of his recent attitudes, saying, “I would appeal to all my young friends to not let the pleasures of the world eclipse the loveliness of Christ.” Among the last words he said to his father were “Father, you are losing your son. You will miss me, but don’t mourn. It is better for me. I shall escape being drafted.”<sup>123</sup>

This death profoundly hurt James and Ellen. James expressed his pain by stating, “A heavy blow has fallen upon us. Our dear Henry sleeps in Jesus.” At this time, the support of friends made James thankfully say, “We are remarkably sustained under this affliction. God is good.”<sup>124</sup> The experience was painful, as Ellen remarked: “Both parents and the two remaining sons felt the blow most keenly.”<sup>125</sup> She also wrote,

We feel the loss of our Henry very much. We miss him everywhere. The youngest and the oldest branches of the family tree have been broken off. We return from our Eastern journey wounded but not comfortless. It was a great blessing to be permitted to watch the last painful hours of my firstborn. My sweet singer is dead. No more will his voice unite with us around the family altar; no more will music be called forth by his skillful touch; ... But we look forward with joy to the resurrection morning ... What a hope for the Christian! ... As I closed the eyes of my noble boy in death, I could say from the heart. ‘The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.’ Our hope is not in this world. If it were, we should be

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<sup>122</sup> G. Keith Olson, *Why Teenagers Act the Way They Do* (Loveland, CO: Group Books, 1987), 21–23; Roger L. Dudley, *Why Teenagers Reject Religion ... And What To Do About It* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1978), 27–41.

<sup>123</sup> Adelia P. Patten, “Death of Henry N. White,” in James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1888), 347–348. For an account of Henry’s last moments, see Adelia P. Patten, “Brief Narrative of the Life, Experience and Last Sickness of Henry N. White.”

<sup>124</sup> James White to Ira and Rhoda Abbey, December 12, 1863.

<sup>125</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:103.

inconsolable.<sup>126</sup>

During these tragic events, James was there to comfort Ellen. Though he felt “the blow keenly,” he recognized that “the tenderest earthly tie is between the mother and her child.” “She who bears the child,” continued James, “and from her body gives it the nourishment which nature provides, feels when the cord is severed, as the father cannot.”<sup>127</sup> The pain in Ellen’s heart can be seen in the way she spoke about this experience about fifty years later. “If we had only known then what we know now,” she sadly concluded, “we could have saved Henry.”<sup>128</sup>

The deaths of their sons did not stop their ministry. “Since the death of our dear children,” James wrote, “the Lord has opened before us a vast field of labor.” They continued their teamwork “with faith and courage,” pressing “forward in the work he [God] had given us, in bright hope of meeting our children, who had been torn from us by death, in that world where sickness and death will not come.”<sup>129</sup>

### The Whites and Raising Children

The Whites used “kind but firm” discipline with their boys.<sup>130</sup> Ellen acknowledged that they had not been perfect in raising their children. She understood that there were times when they failed. One of the visions she received pointed to this fact:

I was shown regard to our family, that we had failed in our duty; we had not restrained them. We had indulged them too much, suffered them to follow their own inclinations and desires, and suffered them to indulge in folly. Nonsensical talk should be immediately and promptly stopped. I saw that it required much perseveringly labor to knit their hearts to us that when we are absent we can have influence over them.<sup>131</sup>

In general, however, Ellen felt that they had been successful in raising and teaching their children. Later in her life, she wrote,

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<sup>126</sup> Ellen G. White, untitled, Ms 13, December 1863.

<sup>127</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880), 325.

<sup>128</sup> Kathy Lewis, “White, Henry Nichols,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*.

<sup>129</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880), 325.

<sup>130</sup> William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: XXX,” 1936, 7.

<sup>131</sup> Ellen G. White, “Testimony for James and Ellen White’s Family,” Ms 8, 1862; cf. Moon, “William Clarence White,” 46–50.

When the children will beg that they may go to this company or join that party of amusement, say to them: “I cannot let you go, children; sit right down here, and I will tell you why. I am doing up work for eternity and for God. God has given you to me and entrusted you to my care. I am standing in the place of God to you, my children; therefore I must watch you as one who must give an account in the day of God. Do you want your mother’s name written in the books of heaven as one who failed to do her duty to her children, as one who let the enemy come in and pre-occupy the ground that I ought to have occupied? Children, I am going to tell you which is the right way, and then if you choose to turn away from your mother and go into the paths of wickedness, your mother will stand clear, but you will have to suffer for your own sins.” This is the way I did with my children, and before I would get through, they would be weeping, and they would say, “Won’t you pray for us?” Well, I never refused to pray for them. I knelt by their side and prayed with them. Then I have gone away and have pleaded with God until the sun was up in the heavens, the whole night long, that the spell of the enemy might be broken, and I have had the victory. Although it cost me a night’s labor, yet I felt richly paid when my children would hang about my neck and say, “Oh, Mother, we are so glad that you did not let us go when we wanted to. Now we see that it would have been wrong.”<sup>132</sup>

For the Whites, the children were their highest priority, and even though the parents were not faultless, they did what they thought was best, always aiming at the goodness and salvation of their boys.<sup>133</sup>

James Edson (known as Edson)

Edson was the second son of the Whites. The Whites’s most strongly worded letters were to Edson. Both parents suffered because of his “disposition to disobedience,” “a yielding to temptation” and “to deceive” his parents. He also had “a strong, set will,” and was not disciplined “to be submissive.” His disposition in leading “Willie to disobedience” planted “a thorn” in Ellen’s heart and “convinced” her that Edson “could

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<sup>132</sup> Ellen G. White, “Sermon by Mrs. E. G. White,” Ms 13, December 1, 1888.

<sup>133</sup> Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 59–60.

not be trusted.” She continued, “Instead of being a comfort you are a source of painful anxiety. My reflections are very sad in connection with you, Edson.”<sup>134</sup>

A month before his sixteenth birthday, Ellen rebuked Edson several times in a long letter, with a note above the title advising, “Read this alone, Private.” According to her, God had “been pleased to show” her Edson’s “peculiar dangers and besetments.”

This distressed Ellen. She sadly wrote,

It is my anxiety and fears in regard to you which has prevented my sleeping nights and has brought upon me dyspepsia. Sadness of spirits and heaviness of heart, which is wearing me down and bringing debility upon me affects the digestive organs and cause inaction of the liver.”<sup>135</sup>

She concluded the letter by repeating what she had mentioned before: “I have lost confidence in you.”<sup>136</sup> James also had complaints about Edson’s attitude. Regarding his influence on his brothers, James stated,

You have two things to guard against: [1] You are very easily excited to lightness, which sometimes seems to have no bounds. Be careful. Your influence on Willie in this respect is bad. [2] You are very set when you get your mind fixed. This troubles Henry especially.<sup>137</sup>

On the other hand, the youngest son, Willie, five years younger than Edson, received letters in another tone: “You have been a great comfort to us, because you have

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<sup>134</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 4) June 20, 1865.

<sup>135</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 4) June 20, 1865.

<sup>136</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 4) June 20, 1865.

<sup>137</sup> James White to J. Edson White, January 12, 1860; cf. James White to J. Edson White, March 20, 1860.

always been so anxious to do as we wished you to. This is right.”<sup>138</sup> He was called “sweet Willie,” “pure sweet Willie,” and “our sunshine.”<sup>139</sup>

Nevertheless, Edson was not seen as a hopeless case. Expressions such as “I love you” are found very often in Ellen’s correspondence to her children, including Edson. When she saw a ray of hope and goodness in Edson’s life she was ready to recognize it. And she always reminded him that love was what prompted her to call his attention to these matters. “I have been so grateful to hear such good news from you,” penned Ellen, that you were trying to do right and had not been wrong or caused the family grief that you are with. . . . You may sometimes think we are too careful of you . . . Father and mother love you very much. We instruct you and warn you for your good.”<sup>140</sup>

During this period, we see no controversy between James and Ellen on the issue of raising their children.<sup>141</sup> They took the responsibility of raising them seriously and did the best they could not only to help them be good citizens, but more importantly to prepare for heaven.

### Ellen Defends James

As had happened in previous years, Ellen had to support James’s position in the Sabbatarian movement. James had been the object of severe criticism from some who

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<sup>138</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 24) July 26, 1861.

<sup>139</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 2) March 3, 1860 (republished in *Appeal to Youth*, 60–61); cf. Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 3) March 14, 1860 (in *Appeal to Youth*, 61–63).

<sup>140</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 11) October 15, 1859.

<sup>141</sup> There are traces of conflict between James and Ellen during the 1870s over how to relate to Edson, but since this comes after the period covered in this chapter, it will be dealt with in the next one. For more on this see Moon, “William Clarence White,” 39–41; Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 39–41.

worked against him and others who worked with him. The situation forced Ellen to defend James on several occasions, and to rebuke him when necessary as well.

It was clear in Ellen's mind that God had called James to be a leader in the Sabbatarian movement. "I saw that God had chosen James," stated Ellen,

to fill an important place, and has made him his agent to forward his work. I saw that God had made him a burden-bearer from the commencement of his work. Since 1844 God thrust him out that he should obtain an experience to fill the place he designed for him to occupy, as one to manage in his cause to forward the work. In order to do this he has had to take responsibilities and to risk something on the success of this message.<sup>142</sup>

In 1903, looking back to the early years of the movement, she penned, "In the early days of our denominational work the Lord did designate Elder James White as one who, in connection with his wife, and under the Lord's special guidance, was to take a leading part in the advancement of this work." But she added that she never claimed the leadership of the people.<sup>143</sup>

In 1859, when leaders of the church, such as Byington, Fletcher, and Smith, criticized James for "going too far, moving too fast," and venturing "out to do so much," Ellen wrote, "I saw that if these should have their will and their way[,] how the work should move, how it should progress, it would not move at all. Their fears and doubts and lack of energy would cause the work to stand still."<sup>144</sup>

These problems continued through the early 1860s. In a letter to Smith's wife, Ellen pointed out that Fletcher, Byington, Uriah, his wife Harriet, "and other individuals"

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<sup>142</sup> Ellen G. White to William Peabody, "Regarding James White as a Leader," (Lt 27) 1859; cf. Ellen G. White to John Byington, (Lt 28) [no date] 1859; Ellen G. White to William S. Ingraham, (Lt 32), June 19, 1861.

<sup>143</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 8:237.

<sup>144</sup> Ellen G. White to John Byington, (Lt 28) [n.d.] 1859.

were united in what “seemed to be a chain of connection with dissatisfied feelings and watching James and me with jealousy and suspicion.” Ellen stated sadly that “Uriah and James were shown me a distance apart from each other, not united. Darkness was in the Office.”<sup>145</sup> The workers, including James, were voicing their unhappy feelings toward their co-workers behind their backs. Ellen wrote,

There was occasion for Bro. White’s feelings and Bro. Waggoner’s, but their feelings were too strong and their course was wrong in not going directly to Uriah and talking over matters with him. But Uriah’s and your wrong was still greater in carrying the matter to others and writing to Waukon before speaking to James upon the matter.<sup>146</sup>

Harriet Smith leaned toward the thought that James was being too severe when rebuked someone. Ellen pointed out that James had the burden given by God to “bear a plain testimony” and that this resulted in “[i]ndividuals ... watching James with jealousy and suspicion, and the feelings and prejudices have been communicated to each other.”<sup>147</sup>

It was not pleasant for James to do this but it was his responsibility to correct what had been wrong. Ellen defended the attitude of her husband, saying, “The plain reproofs that my husband there bore were not received, but he was looked upon as being hard and severe; but I was shown that had he borne a more mild testimony he would have

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<sup>145</sup> Ellen had pointed out before the need of Uriah and James work united, “I saw that there has been feeling that James was too sensitive, too strong feeling; but I saw that some one must have the care and feel, and feel strongly too, and move decidedly in the office. ... God has not released James from the office. He has the care, responsibility and burden, and God has not released you from your place. I saw like two brothers, true yoke-fellows should you labor together, your interest one” (Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith, [Lt 6] October 8, 1857).

<sup>146</sup> Ellen G. White to Harriet Smith, (Lt 7a) June 1860.

<sup>147</sup> Ellen G. White to Harriet Smith, (Lt 7a) June 1860.



merited the displeasure of God.”<sup>148</sup> In a letter to John Andrews, she repeated the same. Though James was called “ensorious and severe,” Ellen assured Andrews that his “reproofs given in Paris were no more severe than the case deserved.”<sup>149</sup> John Andrews was also affected by this and tended to sympathize with the reprovéd instead of helping them see their errors and change their ways.

Ellen White then called the attention to the point that James acted according to the visions and those who called James too severe doubted the visions.<sup>150</sup> She went on to say that “this leaven must be rooted out,” and the only cure was to give up the prejudice and accept the rebukes given by James.<sup>151</sup>

Harriet, according to Ellen, had been deceived in the way she was looking at James, with “opposition of feeling” and “much fear” as if “he were a tyrant.” The problem was that she had “sympathized with ... [those who had] expressed great dissatisfaction in regard to James.” Ellen wanted those in the Office to “have perfect confidence[,] ... frankness and openness to each other.” Instead of repenting and confessing, Harriet had “kept silent and considered [she was] suffering wrongfully and Brother White was censorious, severe, and exacting.”<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Ellen G. White to Harriet Smith, (Lt 7a) June 1860; cf. Ellen G. White to Harriet Smith, (Lt 7) June 1860.

<sup>149</sup> Ellen G. White to John N. Andrews, (Lt 8) June 11, 1860.

<sup>150</sup> Ellen G. White to Harriet Smith, (Lt 7) June 1860; Ellen G. White to Harriet Smith, (Lt 7a) June 1860; Ellen G. White to John N. Andrews, (Lt 8) June 11, 1860.

<sup>151</sup> Ellen G. White to Harriet Smith, (Lt 7) June 1860; Ellen G. White to John N. Andrews, (Lt 8) June 11, 1860.

<sup>152</sup> Ellen G. White to Harriet Smith, (Lt 7) June 1860; Ellen G. White to John N. Andrews, (Lt 8) June 11, 1860.

Ellen recognized, and when she had a chance mentioned, that the burden upon her husband was heavy. He was a man “who had the labor of three men upon him.” His responsibilities “obliged” him “to labor day after day and often long into night. He has had upon him not only the care of the paper and the office, but the care and burden of the cause of God, east and west, north and south.” James’s work required “the closest care and mental study, and the exercise of sound judgment and wisdom. He has no time to visit, no time to study and reflect; it is active business.” To fulfill the needs of the church, James spent “many sleepless nights, and wrestle[d] in earnest, fervent prayer to God.” However, from some who should have shared his fervor and energy, he received “censure instead of sympathy and help.”<sup>153</sup>

Ellen wrote that James was “not perfect” and “[h]e may speak quite strongly in the ardor of his feelings.” However, according to Ellen, he was ready to confess his errors when he felt he was wrong. “If Uriah and you were as free to confess when you erred as James White has been, there would not be trouble which now exists,” Ellen stated. She added that Harriet was guilty of continuing the feeling. “This is the same feeling which you have brought down from Paris to Rochester, and from Rochester to Waukon, from Waukon here.”<sup>154</sup>

The years 1860 and 1861 were described as difficult years for them. Institutional crisis and overwork led James to a health crisis. The Whites were depressed by the death of their youngest child and the unjust efforts to weaken their influence among the

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<sup>153</sup> Ellen G. White to T. M. Steward, (Lt 18) 1862.

<sup>154</sup> Ellen G. White to Harriet Smith, (Lt 7) June 1860; Ellen G. White to John N. Andrews, (Lt 8) June 11, 1860.

believers.<sup>155</sup> “About this time,” Ellen remarked, “my husband, as he reviewed the past, began to lose confidence in almost everyone.” As he looked back and saw some of those whom he had tried to help and who now were against him, his emotions broke and he sometimes “wept aloud”.<sup>156</sup> Even close relatives, such as Ellen’s sister Sarah and her parents, turned against James and Ellen.<sup>157</sup> The situation was extreme enough that Ellen wrote to Lucinda Hall, one of her closest friends,

Never, never did I see my husband so discouraged as now. ... The trials which occurred last summer have so shaken his confidence in his brethren, especially ministers, that I fear he will never recover from it. ... Some think it strange that Brother White should feel thus discouraged. ... Is it then strange that my husband, with his sensitive feelings, should suffer in mind? Yes, his mind has bordered on insanity in regard to these things.<sup>158</sup>

She concluded by saying that she would be with her husband and do her part:

My spirit is stirred within me. I will speak. I will not keep silence. I have girded the armor about me. I am prepared for battle. In the name of the Lord of hosts I will go forth and act any part which God may assign me in this work. The cause is the Lord’s. Truth will triumph. God will not leave His children to perish. Pray for us, your unworthy friends, that God may lead us forth victorious.<sup>159</sup>

Ellen saw that some were “breathing out murmurings and complaints” to “dishearten and unfit” James “to act the part there which God designed he should act.” James was greatly affected. Ellen continued,

It was a bitter, cruel work and its effect has been to destroy the courage of Brother White and his power to hope. His mind, courage, and faith have become so enfeebled that he could not control his mind; would he be spiritual or devotional, the mind

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<sup>155</sup> Ellen G. White to William Ingraham, (Lt 17) January 17, 1861; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:210; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:433–434.

<sup>156</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:247; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:432.

<sup>157</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:441.

<sup>158</sup> Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 5a) April 5, 1861.

<sup>159</sup> Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 5a) April 5, 1861; cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:441–442.

would immediately drop to the injustice done him, which had weakened his energies and faith. Everything he undertook to accomplish was marked with discouragement. His soul was stung with the unjust course of those who knew what he had suffered in this cause—the privations endured and sacrifice made to see it prosper. Jesus alone has known the real sufferings of his mind and has laid His hand beneath him to lift him above the oppressive weight which was destroying his health, his happiness, and his usefulness.<sup>160</sup>

She commented that God had placed James to do what he was doing. “I saw,” she penned,

that God was not pleased with his strong desire to leave the Office, the very place He wished him to be in. He requires him still to fill the position He has chosen him to occupy. It has been Satan’s plan to so control his mind as to keep it dwelling upon the unjust course of his brethren toward him and finally drive him to insanity.<sup>161</sup>

She then recognized that “Uriah has felt deeply over the part he has acted in bringing James into such hopeless discouragement.” The Smiths had confessed their error, but they still had work to do to help Andrews and their families stop looking to James with suspicion.<sup>162</sup>

During the same period, Ellen wrote in favor of her husband, “I was shown the weight of responsibility resting upon James. But few have any interest or care whether he is overwhelmed or not.” Despite the indifference of some and the injustice of accusing

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<sup>160</sup> Ellen G. White, “The Review Office,” Ms 1, 1864.

<sup>161</sup> Ellen G. White, “The Review Office,” Ms 1, 1864.

<sup>162</sup> Ellen G. White, “The Review Office,” Ms 1, 1864. James recognized that both Uriah and John Andrews were “two splendid young men and sincere Christians, possessing sweetness of temper and fine feelings beyond any two men of their mind and talent I ever saw. They are coming out like gold, seven times purified. But O, the unnecessary anguish of spirit these two men have suffered in consequence of the stubborn rebellion at Paris. It has well nigh ruined them both, and resulted in tearing them down from responsible stations” (James White to E. P. Butler, December 12, 1861). For a summary on the tensions between the Whites and Smiths during this period, see Gary Land, *Uriah Smith: Apologist and Biblical Commentator* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2014).

James, she confidently wrote, “God has marked Brother White’s tears, his anguish, his distress, his hopelessness, his despair—all caused by the course of others.”<sup>163</sup>

For Ellen, the condition of the church deeply affected James and herself.

The condition of God’s cause and people nearly crushed us. Our happiness ever depends upon the state of the cause of God. When His people are in a prosperous condition, we feel free; but when they are backslidden and there is discord among them, nothing can make us joyful. Our whole interest and life have been interwoven with the rise and progress of the third angel’s message. We are bound up in it, and when it does not prosper, we experience great suffering of mind.<sup>164</sup>

Ellen never thought her husband was faultless, but as she considered the situation, she found more to rebuke in others than in James. In his position he had to act in a way that was not the most pleasant, and many thought he was severe in his attitude.

Nevertheless, most of the time Ellen tried to demonstrate that in certain situations, James had to act as a leader, and if it was necessary to rebuke, he had to do it. According to her, though she recognized that sometimes James had been too harsh, James was in the place where God wanted him to be, and those who looked to James with jealousy and suspicion had this attitude because of lack of love for the cause or lack of sanctification.

## Main Issues that Involved the Whites and How They Affected Their Relationship

### Church Organization

The Whites spent much of the 1850s and 1860s in building a consensus among Sabbath-keeping Adventists on the issue of organization. They both recognized the need for organization in order to facilitate the mission of the church and amplify the means of

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<sup>163</sup> Ellen G. White to Frederick Wheeler, (Lt 20) August, 1861.

<sup>164</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:246–247 (1861); Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:432–433; Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 5a) April 5, 1861.

spreading the message. James White took the initiative to press this matter by voice and pen; therefore, he is rightly recognized as the “father of church order among the Sabbatarians.”<sup>165</sup> Though James took leadership of the campaign for organization, Ellen “stood firmly with her husband in this matter.”<sup>166</sup>

The earliest statement from James on church order appeared in 1849, when he claimed that those called to travel should be supported.<sup>167</sup> In 1850, Ellen joined him and penned her first unambiguous comments on the need for church order when she wrote, “[E]verything in heaven was in perfect order.”<sup>168</sup> In 1853, James “wrote his first carefully considered exposition on the matter of church order, the first such study by a Sabbatarian Adventist,” based on 1 Cor 14:33,<sup>169</sup> arguing that they “must avoid, on the one hand, the extreme of confusion and lack of order ... and, on the other hand, the inflexibility of human creeds.”<sup>170</sup> He kept pressing the message of an ideal church “united without a human creed, build on Bible discipline and Bible union,” avoiding the extremes of “popery” and “anarchy.”<sup>171</sup>

During this period, many opposed James’s leadership and showed disregard for the visions. As pointed out by Arthur White, “Church order and spiritual gifts were

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<sup>165</sup> Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, 4:1059.

<sup>166</sup> Knight, “Organization,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*.

<sup>167</sup> James White to Philip and Nancy Collins, September 8, 1849.

<sup>168</sup> Ellen G. White, “Vision at Paris, Maine,” Ms 11, 1850.

<sup>169</sup> “For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.”

<sup>170</sup> Mustard, “James White,” 126; cf. 126–127. [James White], “Gospel Order,” *RH*, December 6, 1853, 173; idem, “Gospel Order,” December 13, 1853, 180; idem, “Gospel Order,” December 20, 1853, 188–190; idem, “Gospel Order,” December 27, 1853, 196–197; idem, “Gospel Order,” March 28, 1854, 76–77; cf. Bates, “Church Order,” *RH*, August 29, 1854, 22–23.

<sup>171</sup> James White, “Extremes,” *RH*, March 24, 1859, 140–141.

closely linked together.”<sup>172</sup> Since the Whites worked in “a closely united ministry,” those who opposed one tended to accuse both in the same boat.<sup>173</sup>

In a vision given to Ellen in December 23, 1860, she was shown that God was approving the initiative for organization and that God had called James and Ellen to bear a plain testimony. This vision included several messages of reproof directed to some individuals who were disturbing the unity of the church and truth and influencing others against the work God had called the Whites to do. Ellen plainly stated,

From the commencement of our labors we have been called to bear a plain, pointed testimony, to reprove wrongs and spare not. And all the way there have been those who have stood in opposition to our testimony, and have followed after to speak smooth things, daub with untempered mortar, and destroy the influence of our labors. The Lord would rein us up to bear reproof, and then individuals would step right in between us and the people to make our testimony of no effect. Many visions have been given to the effect that we must not shun to declare the counsel of the Lord, but must occupy a position to stir up the people of God, for they are asleep in their sins. I was shown that we had a work to do, that we must still bear our testimony, straight and pointed.<sup>174</sup>

As James saw Sabbatarian Adventists regressing on the subject of unity and church order, he continued writing on the subject. Ellen joined with him in both preaching and writing on the issue.<sup>175</sup> The articles, testimonies, and personal contact had

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<sup>172</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:448.

<sup>173</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:10; cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White* 1:448–453.

<sup>174</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies* 1:247–248; quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White* 1:433. The messages were published in 1861 in *Testimony* No. 6, and are now published in Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:210–252; cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White* 1:432–444.

<sup>175</sup> James White, “Organization,” *RH*, August 27, 1861, 100; [idem], “Eastern Tour,” *RH*, August 27, 1861, 100; [idem], “The Cause,” *RH*, October 29, 1861, 172; Ellen G. White, “Communication from Sister White,” *RH*, August 27, 1861, 101–102; [idem], “Testimony for the Mill Grove Church,” Ms 3, 1861; idem, *Testimony for the Church*. No. 6 (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1861), in idem, *Testimonies*, 1:210–216.

a positive response. The most “influential leaders of the church now lined up behind [James] White.”<sup>176</sup>

In 1860 the name *Seventh-day Adventist* was chosen, and in 1861 they organized the first local conference and the Publishing Association. When they saw the benefits of organization and moved toward organizing a General Conference, James was joyful at this progress, but related that the experience was painful for him. He was disappointed that he had met with opposition and some who were in favor were silent. “In this we were disappointed,” wrote James. “Then we stood nearly alone. The battle went hard, and we needed help.” The battle wore James out. “We feel at least four years older than two years since,” he wrote, “and sometimes fear that we never can fully recover from the effects of those heartrending discouragements which so nearly drove us from the brethren, and from that cause which was dearer to us than life.” However, he rejoiced at the victory for the benefit of the church, and wrote, “That sadness is wearing off, and we hope to regain our usual freedom, ... We hope to be able to rise above the discouragements of the past.”<sup>177</sup> Two months later, James expressed another feeling:

We are enjoying usual health, and most perfect freedom of spirit. We design to go forward by faith and do our duty fully, and instead of mourning over others’ errors, seek for freedom, and let others feel the weight of their own wrongs. God has given us a testimony, and He will give us freedom and strength to bear it.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Mustard, “James White,” 153.

<sup>177</sup> James White, “Organization,” *RH*, January 7, 1862, 44; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:460–461.

<sup>178</sup> [James White], “Western Tour,” *RH*, March 4, 1862, 108; cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:474; Mustard, “James White,” 157–158.



Despite the victory, opposition continued.<sup>179</sup> Some criticized James and his reputation doubting his business integrity and honesty.<sup>180</sup> The church then took action to clarify the issues. During a time period of about a month and a half (from the end of March to the middle of May), people were asked to send any “charges, complaints, and murmurs” they had against James, whether they were about treatment of others, mismanagement of means, “or that he has not in all his dealings in temporal matters manifested the strictest integrity, probity, and uprightness, to immediately report their grievances, and the grounds upon which they base them.”<sup>181</sup> James was completely in agreement with the resolution and requested people to “make it known” whether they were satisfied or not with his course. He added,

The church deemed it necessary, for the good of the cause, that there should be an investigation of our business career connected with the cause, and a printed report made. If flying reports be true, we should be separated from the cause. If an open and critical investigation proves them false, a printed report in the hands of the friends of the cause with which we have been connected may, in some instances at least, paralyze the tongue of slander.<sup>182</sup>

By May 1863, no one had sent complaints, and about seventy people had sent good recommendations. The Adventists in Battle Creek voted to publish “a record of the action of the Battle Creek church relative to the accusations against Bro. James White,

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<sup>179</sup> [James White], “Extremes,” *RH*, March 31, 1863, 140.

<sup>180</sup> See e.g., Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:311–323.

<sup>181</sup> Uriah Smith and E. S. Walker, “Business Meeting of the Church in Battle Creek,” *RH*, March 31, 1863, 141; cf. U. S[mith], “Remarks,” *RH*, March 31, 1863, 141; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:30–31; Wheeler, *James White*, 148.

<sup>182</sup> [James White], n.t., *RH*, April 7, 1863, 152; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:31.

and the substance of the responses received.”<sup>183</sup> “In concluding,” the booklet stated, “no one has presented any complaint of being wronged by him. None have charged him with taking advantage of their circumstances to favor himself, or exhorting from them means under any plea or pretense whatever.” A few lines gave the final word: “And why have none come up with wrongs charged against Bro. W.? Simply because no such wrongs do in truth exist.”<sup>184</sup>

When the General Conference was organized in May 1863, James was “unanimously chosen President, but declined to serve.” John Byington was then elected for the position.<sup>185</sup> A word of appreciation was also given to Ellen White and her ministry.<sup>186</sup>

The issue of organization left the Whites worn out. However, they were certain that it would benefit the spreading of the Adventist message and unite the church in purpose and mission. With this belief, the Whites used their influence to fight through pen and voice for an organized church. The battle united the Whites more than ever. Though James took the leadership role Ellen stood with him, strengthening him and joining him in pressing the issue to the Adventists.

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<sup>183</sup> John Byington and Uriah Smith, “Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists,” *RH*, May 26, 1863, 205. About two months later they published a 40-page document entitled, *Vindication of the Business Career of Elder James White* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1863).

<sup>184</sup> *Vindication of the Business Career of Elder James White* (1863), 38–39; Wheeler, *James White*, 149.

<sup>185</sup> John Byington and U[riah] Smith, “Report of the General Conference” *RH*, May 26, 1863, 205. James “feared that having so long advocated organization, he would now be charged with having promoted it simply to gain power” (Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 94).

<sup>186</sup> Wm. S. Higley Jr. and U. Smith, “Doings of the Mich. State Conference. May 22, 1863,” *RH*, May 26, 1863, 206.

## The Civil War

The purpose of this section is to analyze Ellen White's defense of James White as presented in *Testimony* No. 9, regarding his article "The Nation," which appeared in the *Review and Herald* of August 12, 1862.

During the Civil War in the United States (1861–1865), James, as one of the leaders of the Sabbatarian movement and the editor of its major periodical, decided to write some lines upon the subject of the Christian attitude toward war. His aim was both to help church members who had questions about what to do in a possible national draft and to clarify the Adventist position to non-Adventists. His views, however, generated divergent opinions, and for several months the *Review and Herald* served as the publishing arena for the debate. Some of these reactions were strongly accusatory toward James, which led Ellen White to share some words in defense of her husband.<sup>187</sup>

With draft imminent, James was "urged from every quarter to state an opinion as to the duty" of Seventh-day Adventists in case of a military draft.<sup>188</sup> After pondering the subject for some time with much prayer, James decided to express his opinion. Aware that the issue was not a clear and easy one, he reluctantly declared his convictions, knowing that "whatever position" he might take "should suffer censure."<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Ellen's statement was published in *Testimony* No. 9 (1863) and was largely distributed among Seventh-day Adventists; cf. Dale S. Forrester, "An Understanding of Testimony for the Church # 9, 'The Rebellion,' Within Its Historical Setting," (Term paper, Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1977).

<sup>188</sup> [James White], "Our Duty in Reference to the War," *RH*, September 16, 1862, 124; cf. [idem], "To Correspondents," *RH*, September 9, 1862, 118.

<sup>189</sup> [James White], "To Correspondents," *RH*, September 9, 1862, 118.

The *Review* was the main vehicle of information among Adventists and since it had a high circulation among church members, James described what he believed was a balanced biblical position along with his personal view on the possible draft. Being a man of direct discourse, he articulated his views carefully. His presentation, however, was not clearly understood by all, which generated controversies, “feverish” reactions, and confusion.

#### “The Nation”

In August 1862, James published his article about the war, the Adventist position concerning it, and what Adventists should do in case of a national draft.<sup>190</sup> He began by declaring that Adventists were not indifferent to the state of the nation. To support this claim, James drew attention to two points: (1) that the explicit Adventist anti-slavery position had led the circulation of their literature to be “positively forbidden in the slave States,” and (2) that Adventists who voted in the last presidential election voted for Abraham Lincoln, a man who was against slavery and secession.<sup>191</sup>

Avoiding taking part in the Civil War was not an act of cowardice to James, who felt it had a theological basis. He explained that Adventists were not as enthusiastic about this war as other religious groups for two major reasons. First, they did not hold the anti-biblical postmillennial view that the war would have a glorious end with the commencement of “a period of peace and millennial glory.” The second reason was

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<sup>190</sup> James White, “The Nation,” *RH*, August 12, 1862, 84. For a helpful insight on the context and background of this article, see Lake, *A Nation in God’s Hand*, 333–350.

<sup>191</sup> See [Abraham Lincoln], “Republican Principles: Speech of Hon. Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, at the Republican State Convention, June 16th, 1858,” *RH*, September 2, 1858, 126–127; “The Reason for Secession,” *RH*, May 7, 1861, 193.

based on the Adventist belief regarding the “perpetuity and sacredness” of the law of God. For Seventh-day Adventists, the Ten Commandments were a distinguishing feature of their faith visible in both their name and their doctrinal corpus. Based on this conviction, James argued that the law of God was not in “harmony of all the requirements of war.” On the battlefield it would be almost impossible to keep God’s commandments, especially the fourth (the Sabbath) and the sixth (“thou shalt not kill”).<sup>192</sup>

The ideal for James was that Adventists should not participate as volunteer soldiers in the war. A month after publishing “The Nation,” James clarified his position by pointing out his opposition to volunteer military service for Adventists, arguing that they would definitely be poor soldiers “unless they first lost the spirit of truth.”<sup>193</sup> Nevertheless, if the draft became a reality, things would have to be considered differently. Recognizing that the ideal was not always possible, James, thinking in the real sphere, penned his most controversial statement:

But in the case of drafting, the government assumes the responsibility of the violation of the law of God, and it would be madness to resist. He who would resist until, in the administration of military law, he was shot down, goes too far, we think, in taking the responsibility of suicide.<sup>194</sup>

Thus James presented the tension between ideal and the real, and the fact that when the ideal is not possible we must live circumstantially in the real sphere, unless it involves a vital spiritual conflict that implies an open rebellion against God with eternal consequences.

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<sup>192</sup> [James White], “The Nation,” *RH*, August 12, 1862, 84.

<sup>193</sup> [James White], “Our Duty in Reference to the War,” *RH*, September 16, 1862, 124; cf. [idem], “The War Question,” *RH*, October 14, 1862, 159.

<sup>194</sup> [James White], “The Nation,” *RH*, August 12, 1862, 84.

In the second half of the article, James focused on the view that breaking a “good” civil law would be considered an infringement of God’s precepts because Jesus ordained that the people should give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar (Matt 22:21). Finally, he concluded by focusing on the biblical teaching that God is in control of the destiny of this world (Isa 40:15; Rev 19). “He [God] has the nation in his hand,” resumed James, “and will order events for his glory, and the best good of his loyal people.”<sup>195</sup>

In an editorial written two months later as a response to several disagreements and misunderstandings, James made clear that his primary intention in the article “The Nation” was “to briefly state the views” Seventh-day Adventists “entertain on slavery, and to check that spirit of fanaticism which would recklessly proclaim abroad that [they] should resist a military draft.”<sup>196</sup>

The following months were marked by a flood of written responses that arrived at the Review office. James perhaps did not expect this abundance of excited criticism. The responses to “The Nation” varied, but they were basically the fruit of misconceptions regarding James’s intention. Recognizing the difficulty of the subject, James called out for biblically well-balanced opinions.<sup>197</sup> To avoid an open war of opinions in the columns of the *Review*, James adopted the principle of not publishing any “denunciatory” letters

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<sup>195</sup> [James White], “The Nation,” *RH*, August 12, 1862, 84.

<sup>196</sup> [James White], “The War Question,” *RH*, October 14, 1862, 159.

<sup>197</sup> [James White], “The Nation,” *RH*, August 26, 1862, 100; [idem], “To Correspondents,” *RH*, September 9, 1862, 118; [idem], “Our Duty in Reference to the War,” *RH*, September 16, 1862, 124. James asked leaders of the church to “be ready to act unitedly.” and present their biblical opinions on the issue while there was no draft, so that they could reach a consensus on the matter before they had to face it ([idem], “Our Duty In Reference to the War,” *RH*, September 16, 1862, 124).

but only “those which appear kind and candid.”<sup>198</sup> Nevertheless, he kept the church informed about the different reactions.

According to James, several responses were written in “a feverish style,” charging him of “Sabbath-breaking and murder.”<sup>199</sup> His theological position concerning what to do in case of a draft was opposed by many, who claimed they were astonished, grieved, and “terribly” shocked.<sup>200</sup> The excitement grew so dramatically in some areas that, a month after the publication, James had to cancel a trip in part because of the “excited feelings over” the article.<sup>201</sup>

#### Ellen Defends James

Although the discussion in the *Review* helped some to better understand the issue, it did not clarify the subject for all, leaving ample room for divergence. Ellen White, who had been silent on the subject in her published writings, resolved at the beginning of 1863 to write and publish a *Testimony* on the issue with the promise of shedding light on the war and Adventists’ duty in relation to it. The 32-page pamphlet, *Testimony* number 9, was published in January 1863.<sup>202</sup> Only one third of the pamphlet was devoted to the war issue, but the message was comprehensive, stressing major areas of the war and providing guidelines on the Adventist duty toward the war.

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<sup>198</sup> [James White], “The War,” *RH*, September 23, 1862, 136.

<sup>199</sup> [James White], “The Nation,” *RH*, August 26, 1862, 100.

<sup>200</sup> Henry E. Carver, “The War,” *RH*, October 21, 1862, 166–167; J. M. Aldrich, “The War,” *RH*, December 23, 1862, 30.

<sup>201</sup> [James White], editorial note, *RH*, September 9, 1862, 120.

<sup>202</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Church*, No. 9 (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1863); Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:355–389; cf. Editorial note, *RH*, January 6, 1863, 48; Editorial note, *RH*, January 27, 1863, 72; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:45.

The *Testimony* was written in an authoritarian tone. Several times Ellen explicitly declared that her thoughts, and consequently her written admonitions, were derived from what had been shown to her. The expression “I was shown,” or similar phraseology, appears many times throughout the tract, referring to the fact that divine revelation, not human sources, had been the source of her testimony and guidelines concerning the Civil War.

Ellen White’s testimony focused on three major subjects. First, she reproved some attitudes and positions regarding the war. Clearly, she rebuked the nonresistance extremism, but on the other hand, she sent a word of warning to those inclined to enlist.<sup>203</sup> The second major issue she explored in the pamphlet was slavery. Recognizing that “the colored race” was God’s property, and that the pro-slavery principles were “not heaven-born, but proceed[ed] from the dominion of Satan,” she used the opportunity to rebuke the “few in the ranks of Sabbathkeepers who sympathize with the slaveholder.”<sup>204</sup> A third issue she dealt with was the nature of the war. According to her, God was punishing both the North and the South because the “people of this nation have forsaken and forgotten God.” At the root of the war was egocentrism. Men controlled by worldly

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<sup>203</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:356–357, 361; cf. idem, “Regarding the Civil War,” Ms 5, 1862; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:50. It is important to note that when she wrote it, there was not yet a national draft, thus, military service was by voluntary enlistment only (see appendix in *Testimonies*, 1:716–717).

<sup>204</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:358–360. For the next three months, appeared in the *Review*, extracts from the book *Slavery Examined in the Light of the Bible*, authored by a Methodist pastor ([Luther Lee], “The Bible No Refuge for Slavery,” *RH*, from February 3 to May 5, 1863 [except February 17]).



principles made the decisions. The preservation of the Union instead of the end of slavery was the agenda of “many professed Union men.”<sup>205</sup>

Part of *Testimony* number 9 was a defense of James White and the views he expressed in “The Nation.” It was not often a practice of Ellen White to use her position to defend her husband. She did, however, do it occasionally. The main principle she used to justify her attitude in defending James, and also herself, was to protect the cause of God. When she perceived an intention of damaging their image in order to diminish their influence and work in the cause, she would not leave the matter to pass in silence. In a *Testimony* written in 1867, she explained the reason behind her attitude in defending either herself or her husband. “It is humiliating to me,” she wrote,

to point out the errors and rebellion of those who have long been acquainted with us and our work. I do it to correct wrong statements that have gone abroad concerning my husband and myself calculated to injure the cause, and as a warning to others. *If we only were to suffer, I would be silent; but when the cause is in danger of reproach and suffering, I must speak, however humiliating*” (emphasis added).<sup>206</sup>

The basic problem that generated confusion about “The Nation,” according to Ellen White, was misinterpretation of James’s words. “The plain statements,” she wrote, “were distorted, and made to mean what the writer did not intend.” Ellen then criticized the attitude of some, which she called “inconsistent and unreasonable.” “Some moved very indiscreetly,” she continued, and instead of “calmly weighing the matter,” they

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<sup>205</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:367. This was even initially the agenda of president Lincoln, see Abraham Lincoln, telegram to Horace Greeley, in Horace Greeley, *The American Conflict: A History of the Great Rebellion in the United States of America* (Hartford, CT: O. D. Case & Company, 1866); quoted in Forrester, 9.

<sup>206</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:569.

became “agitated” and “excited,” jumping “hastily at conclusions which would not bear investigation.”<sup>207</sup>

Ellen White did not at all endorse the criticism that was targeted at James due to either misunderstanding or fanaticism. She defended James’s reasoning by explaining that his article in the *Review* was both acceptable and biblically founded for several reasons. First, “it was necessary that something be said.” Sabbathkeepers had been looked upon with suspicion by others “because they manifested no greater interest in the war and did not volunteer.” This apparent lack of interest in the war had made some think that Seventh-day Adventists were Rebel sympathizers. Furthermore, Adventists themselves were confused about their duty toward the war and asked for light. Thus, the circumstances called for an explanation of the Adventist position, which James gave. Even if his theology were wrong, there was no room for relentless censure. In kindness, they should have shared their opinions, suspicions, and disagreements in such a manner that everybody would be satisfied with the final result. They might not reach a consensus on the matter, but they should treat each other with respect.

James wrote “The Nation” not only to present why Adventists were not much excited about the war, but also to show that they had no sympathy with the Rebellion. His purpose was to clarify Adventists’s love for the country and their anti-slavery views and he tried to do his best. “There was need of moving with wisdom,” Ellen White stated, “to

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<sup>207</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:356.

turn away the suspicions excited against Sabbathkeepers.” Ellen saw the harsh criticism of James as unfair and suspicious, and the critics received no support from her.<sup>208</sup>

Another reason Ellen supported James was that she saw the fanatical attitude that grew in some as the result of misreading and misinterpreting James’s words. James had never intended to take a pro-war position in the article. On the other hand, he pointed out that in that particular war, a draft should not motivate Adventists to rebel against the government. Neither was this the time to suffer martyrdom, because the battle was not against God’s law. Since the article “The Nation” represented Ellen’s views as well, it can be inferred that she participated in the prayer-nights with her husband pleading for light on the subject. Due to the time limit and the need to say something, James felt responsible for expressing a position. He followed the principle of writing according to *the best light he had at the moment*. His attitude, therefore, should have been applauded instead of criticized. Differing opinions should have been expressed kindly and for the benefit of church members, not to denigrate the editor of the *Review*.

Finally, Ellen White saw a need to defend her husband because he had been the target of severe unjust criticism. She never suggested that James White was perfect, but, as shown in the previous paragraphs, he did what he had to do according to the best available light. Defending the criticized parties was part of Ellen White’s ministry as well. While she recognized the faults and imperfections of people, she often took time to

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<sup>208</sup> It is possible that some “feverish” letters had been sent by people who had problems with James in other areas; for example, those with an anti-organization platform (cf. [James White], “The War,” *RH*, September 23, 1862, 136), or were suspicious of James’s financial integrity (cf. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:316–321). To understand the criticism regarding James’s finances, see U. S[mith], “Business Meeting of the Church in Battle Creek,” *RH*, March 31, 1863, 141; [James White], “For the Sake of the Cause,” *RH*, April 7, 1863, 152; *Vindication of the Business Career of Elder James White* (1863).

identify the good intentions and right attitudes of those who had been precipitately and unwisely criticized.<sup>209</sup>

The principle of operating according to the best light raises a fair question: Were not those criticizing James also following their convictions according to the best light they had? Many who wrote letters to James sincerely wanted to share their views based on the understanding they had. Ellen White, however, believed and emphasized that James's view was closer to the Bible than those of his critics. Moreover, some of those who opposed James did not express themselves with love and kindness, as James had.

Ellen, after talking about the principle of the best light, discussed the reasons behind the criticism of James: misunderstanding, pro-slavery convictions, and nonresistance. Ellen White's testimony was a rebuke to the harsh attitudes of those who criticized James without first trying to understand what he had written. She also rejected the pro-slavery sentiment of some Adventists, and she pointed out the fallacies of the extreme nonresistance principle.<sup>210</sup> Therefore, though James did not have complete light, he at least followed what the Bible seemed to say on the matter, on more solid ground than his critics.

In Ellen's defense of James, we see no criticism or rebuking of James. She does not condemn his theological hermeneutic or his ideology concerning the war. It might

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<sup>209</sup> She usually defended leaders of the Church whom despite their imperfections, had been unjustly criticized; for example, Goodloe H. Bell (see Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 5:52–53; cf. 5:91–92), John H. Kellogg (see Ellen G. White to George I. Butler, (Lt 21) October 14, 1888; published in Ellen G. White, *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* [Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987], 99–106), Ellet J. Waggoner (see Ellen G. White, “A Call to a Deeper Study of the Word,” Ms 15, November 1, 1888; in idem, *1888 Materials*, 163–165).

<sup>210</sup> The fanatical nonresistant principle also was in disobedience to God's command to obey the laws of the land if they did not contradict His laws.

seem that she was treating him more kindly than she dealt with others. We should not jump to this conclusion, however, because it would not correctly represent Ellen's character. Several times during his life, James was rebuked by Ellen. Most of their private conversations were kept in confidentiality between them, but we cannot forget that many times Ellen had words of reproof for James in her public writings.<sup>211</sup> In the specific case dealt with here, we can conclude that Ellen did not see mistakes in James's position that needed to be rebuked. Even if he were not totally right, he was still more faithful to the Bible text than his critics.

The *Testimony* brought relief to some church members and helped them recognize that misinterpretation was the root of some criticism. In the following weeks, letters appeared in the *Review* expressing gratitude to Ellen White for resolving the misunderstanding.<sup>212</sup>

### The Health Reform Message

On June 5, 1863, Ellen White received a vision after which she stated, “[T]he great subject of Health Reform was opened before me.”<sup>213</sup> Besides the fact that it was a comprehensive vision that brought a considerable amount of light to the Adventist Church, it is also significant because it provided specific instructions regarding James and his health.

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<sup>211</sup> See for example, Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 3:292, 501–502, 507–508.

<sup>212</sup> B. F. Snook, “Testimony No. 9,” *RH*, March 3, 1863, 109; O. Nichols, “Letter from Bro. Nichols,” *RH*, March 10, 1863, 117.

<sup>213</sup> Ellen G. White, “Questions and Answers,” *RH*, October 8, 1867, 260.

Ellen White felt a burden for James, “and as she prayed, while still on her knees, she moved over to his side, laid her hands on his shoulders, and prayed until she was taken in vision.” James had just recently “bravely borne his part in the battle for organization,” and when the “battle” ended, he had “relaxed” his enthusiasm, which then resulted in weakness and depression.<sup>214</sup> Overwork, perplexity, and false reports about financial integrity definitely also contributed to James’s depression.<sup>215</sup>

In a manuscript dated June 6, 1863, Ellen White described what was revealed to her in the vision regarding her and her husband’s health and work.<sup>216</sup> Ellen gave some details as to why the vision contained direct messages for the two of them and why James was feeling so depressed. She saw that Satan was working hard to destroy their usefulness. In James’s case, she noticed that he was dwelling upon past injustices that had been done to him and fostering an unforgiving heart.

Ellen also called attention to the fact that James was working too hard and investing too much energy in doing what others should be doing. This was robbing him of the time and brainpower to do what only he could do. His overwork was a result of both a lack of consecration and responsibility in those who worked with him and his own

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<sup>214</sup> William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White. XXXVII—Light on Healthful Living,” *RH*, November 12, 1936, 3.

<sup>215</sup> During the period involving the organization of the church, some raised “charges against the financial integrity of James White” (V. Robinson, *James White*, 207). In his defense, the church in Battle Creek, after discussing the subject, published a pamphlet vindicating the integrity of his character (*Vindication of the Business Career of Elder James White* [1863]. Cf. John Byington and Uriah Smith, “Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists,” *RH*, May 26, 1863, 205. For more on this, see V. Robinson, *James White*, 207–213; Wheeler, *James White*, 147–151).

<sup>216</sup> Ellen G. White, “Testimony Regarding James and Ellen White,” Ms 1, June 6, 1863.

energetic zeal for the cause that sometimes made him “hard to work with.”<sup>217</sup> Thus, he was an energetic “boss,” but sometimes impatient with his colleagues.

A paragraph from Ellen White described it bluntly,

I saw that my husband had expected others to carry out things just as they were in his mind, just as he would carry them out. When they fail to do this, it annoys him, his peace is destroyed. He can see and take in readily at a glance more than some can see or comprehend with some study. This has troubled him, because others could not carry out his mind and views of order and perfection in their work. Therefore he has felt he must see to this and that, fearing it will be done wrong. Even if it was done wrong a few times, he should not perplex his mind and take the burden of overseeing these things. Let those who labor in the Office learn, let them practice and study and perplex their own brains, make a failure, correct it, and try again, avoiding their former mistakes. In this way they will learn to bear burdens and responsibilities and can take that care which it is their duty to take.<sup>218</sup>

But the vision also brought a message of comfort and appreciation. Ellen White saw that their influence was still needed in the church. In order to be a benefit to the church, however, they should preserve their health. In order to protect their health they, and especially James, should find time to rest, develop “a cheerful, hopeful, peaceful frame of mind,”<sup>219</sup> and both live and teach the health message. The Whites were then called to add to their ministry the responsibility of being “teachers of health reform.”<sup>220</sup>

James was an enthusiastic man. When he put his mind to accomplishing something, he would press toward the goal to the end. His leadership style might have

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<sup>217</sup> See for example, Wheeler, *James White*, 75, 175. Later in his life he said, “It is a disgrace to Seventh-day Adventists to do a second-class job in anything” (James White, “Home Again,” *RH*, May 24, 1877, 164).

<sup>218</sup> Ellen G. White, “Testimony Regarding James and Ellen White,” Ms 1, June 6, 1863.

<sup>219</sup> Ellen G. White, “Testimony Regarding James and Ellen White,” Ms 1, June 6, 1863.

<sup>220</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:73.

offended some, but his ability to get things done was undeniable. Because of his personality, he engaged himself in many enterprises, which in time overburdened him.

As noted above, the vision had specific instructions regarding the mental and physical health of James. He was encouraged to be more patient, share responsibilities, and acquire a cheerful spirit. By so doing, he would have time to rest and develop a forgiving heart. The vision also included a message that church members should learn more about health reform in order to live and proclaim it.<sup>221</sup>

The Whites rapidly worked to adopt the new diet. “The instruction received in vision cut directly across” their habits.<sup>222</sup> Previously they had eaten flesh for two or three meals each day,<sup>223</sup> but they now adhered to a diet of fruits and vegetables, unleavened bread, and food with little salt, avoiding meat<sup>224</sup> and rich, spicy foods.<sup>225</sup> They changed not only what they ate, but also how and when they ate it: a two-meal schedule was adopted. The new lifestyle was beneficial to James, who faithfully followed it.<sup>226</sup> Ellen said that James enjoyed a clearer brain and “his head was generally free from pain.”<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> The vision was printed in August 1864 (Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4:120–156).

<sup>222</sup> Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 1:350.

<sup>223</sup> [James White], “Appetite Again,” *HR*, Jul 1872, 211.

<sup>224</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4:153–154. It is important to note that in “occasional exceptions” the Whites ate some meat after 1863. Roger Coon shows that these exceptions occurred when (1) they were traveling and could not find a better food, (2) in transition with a new cook that not knew how to prepare vegetarian plates, and (3) for therapeutic use (Roger Coon, *Ellen White and Vegetarianism: Did She Practice What She Preached?* [Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1986], 11–18).

<sup>225</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4:151–154; cf. idem, *Testimonies*, 2:371.

<sup>226</sup> [James White], ed., *Health: or How to Live* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Association, 1865), no. 1, 16.

<sup>227</sup> Ellen G. White, “Our Late Experience,” *RH*, February 27, 1866, 97.



Soon after Ellen White's article on health was published, she and James made arrangements to visit the famous Dr. Jackson's health institution in Dansville, New York. In September 1864, they arrived in Dansville for a three-week visit. James wanted to give a firsthand report and learn all he could "about both health reform and new methods in the care of the sick."<sup>228</sup> After leaving Dansville, James and Ellen traveled to other eastern states where they held meetings with health reform as one of the priorities on their agenda.<sup>229</sup> A few months later, in May 1865, James was elected president of the General Conference, and one of his main concerns was health reform.<sup>230</sup>

The new dietary regime invigorated Ellen and helped her to be more comfortable with the loss of some pounds. "I have within eight months lost twenty-five pounds of flesh," Ellen wrote, and continued, "I am better without it. I have more strength than I have realized for years."<sup>231</sup>

The Whites were united in living, preaching, and helping others to improve their health. They were united in both the health message and the work by which they propagated it. Together they worked to alleviate the pain of others. Ellen wrote, "Before our sanitarium there [Battle Creek] was established, my husband and I went from house

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<sup>228</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:83; James White, "Eastern Tour," *RH*, September 6, 1864, 116; cf. [idem], ed., *Health*, no. 1, 12.

<sup>229</sup> James White, "Eastern Tour," *RH*, November 22, 1864, 205; James White, "Eastern Tour," *RH*, November 29, 1864, 5–6; Loughborough, "Report from Bro. Loughborough," *RH*, December 6, 1864, 14; Ellen G. White, "Questions and Answers," *RH*, October 8, 1867, 260.

<sup>230</sup> In one of his lectures given in the General Conference session he spoke about the damage of being intemperate in working, sleeping, and eating unhealthful food ([U. Smith], "The Conference," *RH*, 23 May 1865, 196).

<sup>231</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4:154.

to house to give treatment. Under God’s blessing, we saved the lives of many who were suffering.”<sup>232</sup> On another occasion she wrote,

Before there were any sanitariums amongst us, my husband and I began work in medical missionary lines. We would bring to our house cases that had been given up by the physicians to die. When we knew not what to do for them, we would pray to God most earnestly, and He always sent His blessing. He is the mighty Healer, and He worked with us. We never had time or opportunity to take a medical course, but we had success as we moved out in the fear of God, and sought Him for wisdom at every step. . . . Thus we combined prayer and labor. We used the simple water treatments, and then tried to fasten the eyes of the patients on to the great Healer. We told them what He could do for them.”<sup>233</sup>

Thus the health reform message united the Whites. They changed their family diet and worked to help others do the same. They not only preached and lectured about the subject, but also visited people and offered help in both the physical and spiritual realms.

### Issues of Theology and “Influence”

#### The Great Controversy Theme

In 1858, Ellen had a vision that presented a panoramic view of the great controversy between good and evil. This two-hour vision led her to write thousands of pages on the subject, which became “her organizing principle.”<sup>234</sup> James also published several works that emphasized this vital subject. It seems that engaging in deep conversation about spiritual matters was common for the Whites. In a sermon preached in

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<sup>232</sup> Ellen G. White to Daniel H. and Laretta Kress, (Lt 45) March 10, 1903.

<sup>233</sup> Ellen G. White, “Lessons from the Experience of Pentecost,” Ms 49, 1908.

<sup>234</sup> Douglass, “Great Controversy Theme,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*; cf. idem, compiler, *The Heartbeat of Adventism: The Great Controversy Theme in the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2010); Roger W. Coon, *The Great Visions of Ellen G. White*, 62–75; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:366–375; Michael W. Campbell, “Great Controversy Vision,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*.

Rome, New York, in 1889, Ellen confided, “[W]e [James and Ellen] have talked night after night [about ‘this matter of the law’] until neither of us would sleep.”<sup>235</sup>

Both James and Ellen delved into spiritual subjects, although they were not academically trained theologians. James had been a pastor in the Christian Connexion prior to joining the Millerite movement. They both had the highest regard for the Word of God and engaged in both preaching and teaching God’s ideals. They also spent a great part of their time preparing materials (articles, books, sermons, etc.) on biblical issues, using interpretative principles in agreement with the “Protestant hermeneutical tradition.”<sup>236</sup> As they worked in union to combat the spread of fanaticism among post-Disappointment Millerite Adventists, they presented the truths in the Bible as they understood them through deep communion and study of the Word of God.

### Close Interaction

An interesting aspect of the interaction between the Whites was that many accused James of molding and influencing the testimonies written by his wife. In 1882,

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<sup>235</sup> Ellen G. White, “Christ and the Law,” Ms 5, June 19, 1889. She also declared in the same place, “When Brother Waggoner brought out these ideas in the Minneapolis Conference, it was the first clear teaching of the subject from any human lips I had heard, excepting the communication between myself and my husband.”

<sup>236</sup> Richard M. Davidson, “Bible, Interpretation of,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*; see also Gerhard Pfandl, “Bible, Ellen G. White’s Use of,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*; Ellen G. White, “Notes of Travel,” *RH*, November 25, 1884, 738. Douglass rightly observes, “No one can read very far into the writings of Mrs. White without becoming aware of her profound veneration for the Bible. She was a champion of Bible study, and in the strongest words urged consistent and thorough Bible study” (Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 135). For more on Ellen and her approach to the interpretation of the Bible, see P. Gerard Damsteegt, “Ellen G. White On Biblical Hermeneutics”; idem, “Ellen White On Theology, Its Methods, and the Use of Scripture,” *JATS* 4.2 (1993):115–136; Graham, “Ellen G. White,” 140–156; Pfandl summarizes, “As an interpreter of the Bible, Ellen White was more of an evangelist than an academic theologian. She was more of a prophet than an exegete of the Bible, because she was more interested in the people to whom she was writing than the people the Bible writers were addressing” (Gerhard Pfandl, “Bible, Ellen G. White’s Use of,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*).

Ellen wrote, “Many excused their disregard of the testimonies by saying: ‘Sister White is influenced by her husband; the testimonies are molded by his spirit and judgment.’”<sup>237</sup>

The Whites’s son William, explaining the experience of his parents, said,

In the *early days* of our denominational work, this experience was often repeated. Elder James White, in his preaching, brought out new expositions of Scripture, and new thoughts regarding the best way to advance the cause of present truth; and shortly afterward, Sister White, in her testimonies to the church, advocated the same doctrine and policies. Then the critics cried out, ‘Is it not evident that she is following the lead of her husband’s mind?’ But the true explanation of this was not difficult to find by those who sought it. The facts were these: The Lord had given to Sister White clear light regarding doctrines and policies. As this new light was given her, it was *most natural that she should first tell it to her husband*. Thus he learned enough about what had been revealed to her to give a new zest and direction to his studies, and a new mold and increased power to his discourses, and fresh vigor and greater breadth to his plans. Later on, when Sister White found time to write out her views for publication, they must necessarily agree with the teachings and plans of her husband, so far as his teachings and plans had been influenced by what he had learned from her.

It was *most natural that James and Ellen White should discuss freely and interestedly between themselves*, plans and methods and ways and means for the advancement of the publishing work and the work of the ministers in the field, and that she should tell him of the views given her regarding the most effective methods of labor. As a result, he would shape his plans to harmonize with these views. Often his brethren would criticize these plans, which seemed too broad, and urge other policies. Then when Sister White was appealed to, and it was seen that her testimony was in harmony with the plans and teachings of her husband, some said, ‘She is influenced by him, her testimony is a transcript of her husband’s mind.’

As James White gained experience and confidence as a leader, he sometimes made plans and inaugurated policies that were not in *harmony with instruction given to his wife*. But when reproved or instructed, through the testimonies to the church, for his error, he was quick to respond to counsel or reproof, and hearty in his confession of error” (emphasis added).<sup>238</sup>

This picture presented by William not only shows the affinity of the Whites concerning theology and practical matters, but clearly portrays a couple who took

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<sup>237</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 5:63–64. This was written after the death of James but was an issue that accompanied their entire life.

<sup>238</sup> William C. White, “On the Spirit of Prophecy,” *GCB*, June 2, 1913, 233.

pleasure in talking to each other and spent time interacting. Thus, their relationship got stronger and more solid as they faced difficult times, whether brought about by physical illness or accusations from others.

### Conclusion

The first decade in Battle Creek represented a turning point in the lives of the Whites. For the first time, they could enjoy living in their own house, with all their children, and just a few others who helped them in the home chores, giving them a good sense of a small family. This decade marked the settlement of organization in the local and general spheres. The church also was led to work for the improvement of its people's health. A clear message was given to them regarding the benefits of healthful living and the duty of helping others in health reform. For the first time, they had to deal with issues of war. Despite opposition from some, it is safe to say that in all of these instances, the church grew stronger and more solid.

During this period the White family lost two of their sons. The deaths of John Herbert and Henry Nichols deeply affected them emotionally. These moments pressed them to give up but they never did. Though times were difficult, they had the strength to keep going, and they encouraged one another. Their love and affection for each other and their love for God and the church kept them in the line of duty. The Whites were a loving family, as can be seen through the letters they shared with each other. The kind words of appreciation between James and Ellen clearly demonstrate that they missed each other when away and enjoyed each other's company. The same care is seen in the letters to their sons. As a couple, they had the same ideals for raising their children, which included not only making them good citizens, but most importantly, preparing them for heaven.

When their two older sons entered the teenage years, their parents had to face additional challenges in the rearing of their children. Although Edson gave them some trouble, it apparently did not yet bring serious disagreements between James and Ellen. They were united in the goal of rearing their children in God's way, and appear to have agreed on the methodology.

The issue of organization and other matters connected with the growth of theological and practical unity within the Sabbatarians wore out the Whites. However, their love for the church made them spend hours traveling and writing in order to unite the members of the Sabbatarian movement. When it was clear in their minds that they were fighting a good cause, they never gave up. They used all their eloquence and influence, through pen and voice, to establish the principles that would guide the church in the right path. These battles united the Whites. As a team, they joined efforts to make the cause prosper. When James was facing opposition and sometimes criticism of his integrity Ellen stood up to strengthen him and rebuke the false accusations. When Ellen's prophetic gift or reputation was opposed, James used his influence to biblically point out the need for unity and the gift God was using to unite His people. In all these moments, the Whites grew solidly in their relationship to each other.

Though they were not faultless, this decade was a time of growth in their relationship. They comforted each other when they faced difficult moments or were away. They supported each other in their duties and defended each other when they saw injustice in the accusations against them. These are clear indicators of a mutual affection between James and Ellen. Their relationship continued to demonstrate a high level of commitment, not mere formality. Their sense of mission united them. Their religious

experience had a positive impact on their relationship, because they felt their dependence on God and their need of encouraging each other.

## CHAPTER 6

### IN THE SHADOW OF SICKNESS AND DEATH (1865–1881)

#### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and analyze the major facts, situations, and context that affected the relationship of James and Ellen White during their last sixteen years together. This period began in 1865, when James suffered his first paralytic stroke, and lasted until James's death in 1881. This was the longest and by far the most challenging, but also the most mature phase of their relationship. During this period, the Whites faced stress when James suffered several strokes, the one in 1865 being the most severe. Despite his feeble health and need for more help from Ellen, their last sixteen years together were the busiest. When the Adventist movement was officially organized, James's abilities and good judgment made him the church's main administrator. He served as president of the GC<sup>1</sup> and other SDA institutions for several years, as the Whites increased their traveling, preaching, and writing activities.

Like the previous two chapters, this one begins with a brief "Chronological Overview. A second major section, with the heading "Relationship between James and Ellen," surveys the main developments in their relationship during this period, including several instances of an apparent conjugal crisis, the historical context, and a few analytical insights. The chapter concludes with a third major section, titled "Barriers and Promoting Factors in the Marital Relationship," which gives a more systematic analysis

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<sup>1</sup> James served as president of the GC in 1865–1867, 1869–1871, and 1874–1880.



of the main factors, both positive and negative, that characterized the Whites' marital relationship.

## Chronological Overview

### Second Half of the 1860s

On August 16, 1865, James White suffered his first stroke.<sup>2</sup> Initially, Ellen nursed him at home for five weeks, but then she took him to the hydropathic institution "Our Home on the Hillside" in Dansville, New York, for professional medical treatment.<sup>3</sup> After some weeks in Dansville, on their way back to Battle Creek, they stopped for three weeks in Rochester, New York. While in Rochester, on December 25, 1865, Ellen had a vision about several issues, including a particular message to James<sup>4</sup> and instruction about SDAs having their own health institution.<sup>5</sup> As a result, in August 1866, they

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<sup>2</sup> [U. Smith], "Sickness of Bro. White," *RH*, August 22, 1865, 96; cf. Ellen G. White, "Our Late Experience," *RH*, February 20, 1866, 89; J[ames] W[hite], "Fifteen Years Ago," *RH*, August 26, 1880, 152; Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, 168–169.

<sup>3</sup> James White, "Note," *RH*, October 10, 1865, 150; cf. idem, "My Condition," *RH*, November 7, 1865, 180; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White* 2:119–121.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, "Our Late Experience," *RH*, February 27, 1866, 98. Ellen wrote a manuscript the day after the vision and handed to James (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:613; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 131), but most of the vision subjects were not published until 1867 (*Testimonies* numbers 11, 12, and 13, which are published in *Testimonies*, 1:456–629). James, amplifying upon other materials such as letters, manuscripts, sermons, and articles stated (probably exaggerating a bit), "the Rochester vision, December, 1865, upon which she has written several thousands of pages" (James White, "Monterey and Battle Creek," *RH*, June 16, 1868, 409).

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:489–495, 553–564.

launched a monthly journal, *The Health Reformer*,<sup>6</sup> and the medical institution, named Western Health Reform Institute, opened officially in September.<sup>7</sup>

James's failing health forced him into temporary retirement. Though he was officially the president of the SDA Church, he was unable to manage the administrative affairs for a while. Thus, during 1866 and 1867, Ellen decided to put aside many of her responsibilities and dedicate herself almost wholly to restoring her husband's health.

In order to help James regain strength, the Whites sold their house in Battle Creek and bought a small farm in Greenville, Michigan, where Ellen wisely engaged him in both mental and physical labor in the fresh air.<sup>8</sup> In the spring of 1867, James White was released from his presidencies. Moving to Greenville was a blessing to them. There they were released from excessive burdens and could accomplish more, "especially in writing."<sup>9</sup> During 1867 and 1868 the Whites were busy traveling, preaching, and

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<sup>6</sup> "Prospectus of the Health Reformer," *RH*, June 5, 1866, 8; H. S. Lay, "To the Reader," *HR*, August, 1866, 8; "Late," *HR*, August, 1866, 16; cf. "The Health Reformer," *RH*, June 19, 1866, 24; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:142–144.

<sup>7</sup> "A Great Fact Accomplished," *RH*, September 11, 1866, 116.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. James White, "Report from Bro. White," *RH*, May 14, 1867, 171. For a good description of Ellen White's efforts to improve her husband's health, see Ellen G. White, "On Various Phases of Medical Missionary Work," Ms 50, 1902; James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* [1888], 354–358; D. Robinson, *The Story of Our Health Message*, 160–162; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:157–168, 188–189; V. Robinson, *James White*, 179–190.

<sup>9</sup> James White, "Report from Bro. White," *RH*, April 27, 1869, 141; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 11) March 30, 1868.

publishing.<sup>10</sup> “Sometimes,” James thought, “when weary and worn ... it would be really convenient to us to have the night on such occasions lengthened a few hours.”<sup>11</sup>

When the time came in 1869 for them to return to Battle Creek, the situation there was not the most pleasant to them. Initially, Ellen was reluctant, but James argued that their return would “be a blessing to the Office, Institute and church.”<sup>12</sup> James was again elected the president of both the GC and the SDA Publishing Association, and also a director of the Health Reform Institute.<sup>13</sup>

### 1870s

During the 1870s, their two adult sons got married and left the Whites with an empty nest, although not an empty house, since James and Ellen always had people living with them. Edson married Emma on July 28, 1870, his twenty-first birthday. Willie married Mary on February 9, 1876. In 1871, James faced the death of both of his parents, Betsey (January 9) and John (July 5), who lived across the street from them.<sup>14</sup> During this decade, James was also administratively involved with all the main periodicals and

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<sup>10</sup> Ellen penned in the first months of 1868, “During the last seven months we have been at home but about four weeks ... from Iowa to Maine” (E White, *Testimonies*, 1:680; cf. 1:593–621, 643–644, 653–666; 2:10–23).

<sup>11</sup> James White, “Eastern Tour,” *RH*, January 28, 1868, 104.

<sup>12</sup> Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith and George Amadon, (Lt 3) April 23, 1869.

<sup>13</sup> J. N. Andrews and U. Smith, “Business Proceedings,” *RH*, May 25, 1869, 172–173; E. S. Walker, “S. D. A. Publishing Association,” *RH*, May 25, 1869, 174; Uriah Smith and E. S. Walker, “The Health Reform Institute,” *RH*, May 25, 1869, 174–175; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:269–270.

<sup>14</sup> James White, “My Mother,” *RH*, January 24, 1871, 45; J. N. Andrews, “Obituary Notices,” *RH*, January 24, 1871, 47; James White, “At Home,” *RH*, July 18, 1871, 36; James White, “The Venerable Dead,” *RH*, July 18, 1871, 36.

institutions of the SDA Church, and had little or no time to rest.<sup>15</sup> “We are too much worn to do hard labor at present,” he wrote in 1871, “and see no possible chance to rest, . . . We are still struggling on with two or three men’s work, and hope not to fail before help comes. . . . We have not, however, found an hour’s rest.”<sup>16</sup>

In 1874, the first issue of *Signs of the Times* was published in Oakland, California (June 4),<sup>17</sup> Battle Creek College was inaugurated,<sup>18</sup> and the church sent its first official missionary overseas.<sup>19</sup> In April of 1875, the Pacific SDA Publishing Association was organized.<sup>20</sup> Despite several recommendations from Ellen for James to slow down his activities in Battle Creek, he was once again elected president of the GC,<sup>21</sup> a position he held until 1880. James accepted, recognizing that “the marked indications of Providence, in harmony with the wish of our people, assembled in the name of the Lord, with His

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<sup>15</sup> Close to the end of his life he admitted being called for that ministry and the “pleasure” of being involved in the beginning and prosperity of the SDA periodicals, “Our life,” James penned, “has been bound up in them” (J[ames] W[hite], “Our Publications,” *RH*, March 25, 1880, 200).

<sup>16</sup> [James White], “The Future,” *RH*, August 1, 1871, 56; cf. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 3:91; [idem], Ms 3, October 10, 1871.

<sup>17</sup> James was the first editor, and his name appeared as editor in the masthead until his death.

<sup>18</sup> James served as Battle Creek College titular president from 1874 to 1880. (Wheeler, *James White*, pictures between pp. 128–129).

<sup>19</sup> Geo. I. Butler, “Missionary to Europe,” *RH*, September 15, 1874, 100; cf. J. N. Andrews, “Our Embarkation,” *RH*, September 22, 1874, 112; “The Cause in Europe,” *ST*, December 3, 1874, 76.

<sup>20</sup> Loughborough, “Articles of Incorporation of the ‘Pacific Seventh-day Adventist Published Association,’” *ST*, April 8, 1875, 176; A. M. Driscoll, “Pacific S. D. A. Pub. Association,” *ST*, April 8, 1875, 176.

<sup>21</sup> George I. Butler and S. Brownsberger, “Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Gen. Conf. of S. D. Adventists,” *RH*, August 25, 1874, 75. At the same time James signed notes in the *RH* as president of other church offices (James White, Pres. S. D. A. P[ublishing] A[ssociation], “The Signs of the Times,” *RH*, Sept. 15, 1874, 104; idem, Pres. Board of Directors, “The School at Battle Creek,” *RH*, Sept. 15, 1874, 104).

spirit upon them, have led us to yield to be a servant wherever may be their choice.”<sup>22</sup>

The busy lifestyle plus severe mental strain and lack of rest led James to suffer other strokes.

### The Last Years of the White Couple Together (1880, 1881)

In 1880, James and Ellen published their co-authored autobiography, *Life Sketches*. In October of that year, James attended the nineteenth GC session, held in Battle Creek, which was to be his last. James was the chairman, and George Butler was elected GC president.<sup>23</sup> The previous year had been one of the busiest. “We have done more hard labor the past ten months,” said James, “than during any similar period in our past life.”<sup>24</sup>

On August 6, 1881, James White died. His death was deeply felt by the SDA community.<sup>25</sup> Ellen deeply missed her husband, “whose large affections” she had leaned on and with whom she had “been united in labor for thirty-six years.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “A World-wide Mission,” *RH*, August 25, 1874, 76; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:449.

<sup>23</sup> James White and U. Smith, “General Conference of S. D. Adventists. Nineteenth Annual Session, Oct. 6, 1880,” *RH*, October 14, 1880, 252; James White and U. Smith, “General Conference of S. D. Adventists. Business Proceedings (Concluded),” *RH*, October 21, 1880, 268.

<sup>24</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “Our Publications,” *RH*, March 25, 1880, 200.

<sup>25</sup> [U. Smith], “Fallen at His Post,” *RH*, August 9, 1881, 104–105; “Elder James White,” *New York Times*, August 9, 1881, 5; U. Smith, W. C. Gage, and J. H. Kellogg, “Introductory,” in *In Memoriam: A Sketch of the Last Sickness and Death of Elder James White, Who Died at Battle Creek, Michigan, August 6, 1881, Together with the Discourse Preached at His Funeral* (Battle Creek, MI: Review & Herald Press, 1881), 3; G. I. Butler, S. N. Haskell, and H. W. Kellogg, “The Next General Conference,” *RH*, September 6, 1881, 168–169; S. N. Haskell and U. Smith, “The General Conference,” *RH*, December 13, 1881, 376; H. W. Kellogg and U. Smith, “S. D. A. Publishing Association. Twenty-Second Annual Session,” *RH*, December 20, 1881, 393.

<sup>26</sup> Ellen G. White, “Mrs. White’s Address,” *In Memoriam. A Sketch of the Last Sickness and Death of Elder James White Who Died at Battle Creek, Michigan, August 6, 1881, together with the Discourse*

## Relationship between James and Ellen

### James's First Stroke, August 1865

The letters exchanged between the Whites show that their marriage faced difficulties in certain moments. During those conflicts “James increasingly exhibited the damage of the crippling strokes he had suffered.”<sup>27</sup> The strokes affected his personality, “causing personality traits already present to become more extreme.”<sup>28</sup> This led to “honest confrontation between [them] ... when dark hours came,” resulting in marriage turmoil.

The stroke on August 16, 1865, partly paralyzed James's right arm and affected his “brain and the power of speech.” Two days later he could move his fingers and use his hand to some extent, and his speech had been restored.<sup>29</sup> When physicians explained that “there was a danger of a second shock,” James believed he would die soon, and suggested “to call a lawyer to arrange his business.”<sup>30</sup> The effects of that stroke, the first

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*Preached at His Funeral* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1881), 42; idem, *Testimonies*, 1:111; cf. Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 17) September 12, 1881.

<sup>27</sup> Wheeler, *James White*, 218.

<sup>28</sup> Wheeler, *James White*, 216.

<sup>29</sup> [U. Smith], “Sickness of Bro. White,” *RH*, August 22, 1865, 96; cf. Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, 168–169; James White, “My Condition,” *RH*, November 7, 1865, 180; Ellen G. White, “Our Late Experience,” *RH*, February 20, 1866, 89; J[ames] W[hite], “Fifteen Years Ago,” *RH*, August 26, 1880, 152; William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White,” *RH*, January 7, 1937, 10–12; Ellen G. White, “Reminiscent Account of the Experience of James White's Sickness and Recovery,” Ms 1, 1867 (written early in the 1880's, but filed with the documents for 1867 for convenience); idem, “Early Counsels on Medical Work—No. 2,” *RH*, April 9, 1914, 4; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White* 2:118–119.

<sup>30</sup> Ellen G. White, “Reminiscent Account of the Experience of James White's Sickness and Recovery,” Ms 1, 1867.

of the “severe shocks of apoplexy” that James suffered in the last quarter of his life, “would plague him the rest of his life.”<sup>31</sup>

### Apoplexy in the Eighteenth Century

In the eighteenth century, some physicians considered apoplexy the “most tyrannical of accidents which affect our nature.”<sup>32</sup> Its causes were believed to be both physical and emotional. The notable eighteenth-century Swiss physician Samuel Tissot stated that “anger restrained, and violent sorrow concealed, occasion apoplexies daily.”<sup>33</sup> Though apoplexy respected no place, gender, or age, it was more common in males aged sixty or older, “very corpulent people,” alcoholic drinkers, and smokers of tobacco.<sup>34</sup> However, a lifestyle of prolonged use of intellectual faculties, excess of study, and office work where there was not much physical activity involved were also made one

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<sup>31</sup> J. H. Kellogg, in “Fallen at His Post,” *RH*, August 9, 1881, 105; Jerry Moon and Denis Kaiser, “For Jesus and Scripture: The Life of Ellen G. White,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 44.

<sup>32</sup> My own translation, from Gaspar Pons, *Triunfo de la medicina: en un método racional, y eficazísimo para curar radicalmente las enfermedades internas, y externas del cuerpo humano, que en el vulgo llama incurables, es à saber, apoplexia, perlesia, y epilepsia, asma, empiem, y thisis confirmada, hydropesia, colico rebelde, volvulo, è hipocondria, fiebre hectica, gota, y reumatismo, lepra, fistulas, rijas, ulceras cancerosas, quebraduras recientes, y antiguas, sin molestia, y sin sangrias, ni remedies irritantes, sí bien con especificos medicamentos, gratos, seguros, e eficazísimos, que, para beneficio del public se dàn de gracia, y de limosna* (Madrid: Imprenta de D. Gabriel Ramirez, 1753), 2.

<sup>33</sup> Samuel A. D. Tissot, *Practical Observations on the Small Pox, the Apoplexy, Dropsy, and Nervous Cholic* (Dublin: James William, 1773), 76; cf. Laurent Eugene Vignaux, “Algumas Considerações sobre a Apoplexia Cerebral,” thesis presented to the Faculdade de Medicina do Rio de Janeiro, July 21, 1864 (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia Universal de Laemmert, 1864), 16; Thomas Triplett, *An Inaugural Dissertation on Apoplexy* (Philadelphia, PA: Way & Groff, 1798), 20.

<sup>34</sup> Triplett, 9; cf. 16, 17, 20; Tissot, 125, 127.

predisposed to stroke.<sup>35</sup> A person who suffered a stroke usually died from it or a subsequent disease, and very few recovered.<sup>36</sup>

It is interesting to note that even though symptoms such as chronic headache, vertigo/dizziness, noise in the ears, appearance of sparks in the eyes, and weakening of memory and intelligence were considered “*prodromos*” (forerunners/precursors) of an apoplexy, the French physician Laurent Vignaux pointed out in 1864 that “more ordinarily the affected individuals of apoplexy, are affected in the middle of the most vigorous health when even they had not experienced any indisposition that made them fear this terrible annoyance.”<sup>37</sup> This seems to have been the case with James White. Though he did not enjoy a very healthy life, he described himself as having “inherited a powerful constitution,” but was worn out with many toils and hard work.<sup>38</sup>

#### Intemperance in Work

James and Ellen were very industrious people. This was a characteristic of American Yankees in the first half of the nineteenth century. However, James’s workaholic lifestyle had tragic consequences. He understood that the main reason for his

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<sup>35</sup> Vignaux, “Algumas Considerações,” 16; Tissot, *Practical Observations*, 100, Triplett, *An Inaugural Dissertation*, 16.

<sup>36</sup> Triplett, *An Inaugural Dissertation*, 11, 24.

<sup>37</sup> Vignaux, “Algumas Considerações,” 10.

<sup>38</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880), 127; [James White], “The Office,” *RH*, February 20, 1855, 182.



stroke was “continued physical and mental strain, without the least relaxation from labor for more than ten years.”<sup>39</sup>

Ellen mentioned several times that James did more labor than two or three men.<sup>40</sup> This included both physical and mental labor. Many used James’s “brain instead of using their own.”<sup>41</sup> Though James was alerted many times to the danger of overworking, he continued doing so. He became president of the Adventist Church in May 1865 and served as president for several years.<sup>42</sup> He also was the president or a member of the executive committee for other Adventist institutions, the editor of different periodicals, and a prolific writer. These many responsibilities, in addition to anxiety over resolving

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<sup>39</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “The Future,” *RH*, January 10, 1871, 32; cf. idem, “Grow Old Gracefully,” *RH*, May 15, 1879, 156; Ellen G. White, “Our Late Experience,” *RH*, February 20, 1866, 89; Also, idem, “Reminiscent Account of the Experience of James White’s Sickness and Recovery,” Ms 1, 1867.

<sup>40</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 3:9, 17 (Testimony no. 21, 1872); idem, “Our Late Experience,” *RH*, February 20, 1866, 89. Some years earlier James had written, “The sequel thus far is . . . we have been growing worn and old, two years in one.” (J[ames] W[hite], “The Cause,” *RH*, September 27, 1864, 141; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White* 2:96–97).

<sup>41</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 3:17 (Testimony no. 21, 1872).

<sup>42</sup> James was the only person to serve as president of the General Conference at three different times: [1<sup>st</sup>] May 17, 1865–May 14, 1867; [2<sup>nd</sup>] May 18, 1869–December 29, 1871; [3<sup>rd</sup>] August 13, 1874–October 11, 1880 (John Byington and U. Smith, “Report of the Third Annual Session of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists,” *RH*, May 23, 1865, 196; Byington and U. Smith, “Fourth Annual Session of General Conference,” *RH*, May 22, 1866, 196–197; J. N. Andrews and U. Smith, “Business Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Session of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists,” *RH*, May 25, 1869, 172–173; Ja[me]s White and U. Smith, “Business Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Session of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists,” *RH*, March 22, 1870, 109–110; [James White], “The Future,” *RH*, August 1, 1871, 56; James White and U. Smith, “Business Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists,” *RH*, January 2, 1872, 20; George I. Butler and S. Brownsberger, “Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Gen. Conf. of S. D. Adventists,” *RH*, August 25, 1874, 75; Ja[me]s White and U[riah] Smith, “General Conference of S. D. Adventists,” *RH*, November 20, 1879, 161; James White and U. Smith, “General Conference of S. D. Adventists,” *RH*, October 14, 1880, 252; Moon, “Historical Introduction,” in James White, *Life Incidents*, viii–ix). There were years in which he was not the president but was voted to be part of the “executive committee” (J. N. Andrews and U. Smith, “Business Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists,” *RH*, May 26, 1868, 356).

doctrinal issues in some churches and seeing others do the work of God carelessly, resulted in a breakdown of his health.

Being moderate in his work had always been a problem for James. The pressure of the needs of the emergent church overburdened him. Ellen White, talking about the cause of James's illness, pointed out, "He has sinned against himself and against God overtaxing the energies of his system." "Prolonged," she continued, "unceasing labor, without rest or recreation, has told upon his physical and mental energies."<sup>43</sup> James recognized that the cause of his affliction was intemperance in work and "severe mental strain."<sup>44</sup> He often worked fifteen to eighteen hours a day. His editorials for the *Review* were usually written at night after a hard day of work. Overwork and lack of suitable rest and sleep had destroyed his health.<sup>45</sup> Years later, James confessed that he was blessed with "clearness of thought, freedom of spirit, and physical activity and strength" because

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<sup>43</sup> Ellen G. White, "Our Late Experience," *RH*, February 20, 1866, 89; Also, *idem*, Ms 1, 1867; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:117–118.

<sup>44</sup> In 1879, James affirmed "These dangerous attacks have usually occurred after severe mental strain, such as has ever been our portion at General Conference" (J[ames] W[hite], "Grow Old Gracefully," *RH*, May 15, 1879, 156).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. James White, "Report from Bro. White," *RH*, January 22, 1867, 74. In *Testimony* 12 (1867), Ellen wrote, "My husband thought it wrong for him to spend time in social enjoyment. He could not afford to rest. He thought that the work in the office would suffer if he should. But after the blow fell upon him, causing physical and mental prostration, the work had to be carried on without him ... This was the course which my husband pursued [writing in the night, after a day's work was done]; I protest against such suicide." (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:519–520). James saw himself "very near the grave" several years before this stroke as a result of overworking, traveling, laboring in the churches, and while at home "engaged in the duties of the Office" working "from 14 to 18 hours out of the 24" ([James White], "Be Patient," *RH*, May 16, 1854, 132; cf. [idem], "To the Brn. in Wisconsin," *RH*, September 8, 1853, 68; [idem], "The Office," *RH*, February 20, 1855, 182; cf. Ellen G. White to Dear Brethren and Sisters [exact identity unknown], (Lt 5) December 16, 1854. Reflecting on that experience Ellen wrote, "When the affliction came upon my husband he had labored far beyond his strength. ... The next day I urged him to rest. He answered, 'The paper demands my attention. But when this is off I will give myself one whole day's rest.' How little we know what a day will bring forth. ... The anticipated day of rest was to prove a day of sorrow, a cessation from labor not for weeks but months." (Ellen G. White, "Reminiscent Account of the Experience of James White's Sickness and Recovery," Ms 1, 1867).

of the benefits he had received by changing his lifestyle. Nevertheless, he misused this blessing by “intemperance in labor.”<sup>46</sup>

### James’s Recovery from the First Stroke, and Ellen’s Leadership

When James suffered his first stroke, Ellen nursed him for five weeks at home. Despite many earnest prayers, Ellen said that “for wise purposes” God “did not see fit to raise my husband to immediate health,”<sup>47</sup> because, had God performed a miracle and allowed James to recover quickly, he would “be in danger of again transgressing” and abusing his “strength by prolonged, intemperate labor,” making his condition worse.<sup>48</sup>

Mood and behavioral changes (e.g., depression, anxiety, disorientation, memory impairments, etc.) following a stroke are common and can cause distress for the patient, close relatives, and friends.<sup>49</sup> These changes can be short or long lasting and were largely ignored in nursing textbooks until the 1980s. Acknowledgment of these impairments has resulted in the development of new effective interventions nowadays, but that was not the reality in the nineteenth-century America. Stroke can bring frustration, irritability, anger, and worry for the patient, often resulting in “increased emotional dependence on other people.” Depression is also “the emotional outcome most often associated with stroke.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> James White, “Health Reform—No. 4,” *Health Reformer*, February 1871, 152–153; cf. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement* (1905), 379; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:11.

<sup>47</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, 169.

<sup>48</sup> Ellen G. White, “Our Late Experience,” *RH*, February 20, 1866, 89–90.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Knapp, “Mood and Behavioural Changes,” in *Acute Stroke Nursing*, eds. Jane Williams, Lin Perry, and Caroline Watkins (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 205–221.

<sup>50</sup> Knapp, “Mood and Behavioural Changes,” 206–208; cf. Jon Caswell, “Behavior Changes after Stroke,” *Stroke Connection Magazine*, January/February 2005, 28–29.

The impact of a stroke on the survivor's personality "may be the most difficult for family and friends to understand and become accustomed to."<sup>51</sup>

Being "totally unfit for labor," James went to the hydropathic institution "Our Home on the Hillside" in Dansville, New York, to receive professional medical treatment.<sup>52</sup> James Jackson, the physician-in-chief of the water-cure institute, used to describe his success claiming, "that at least ninety-five per cent of all who have come under" his "professional supervision" had been much helped or "thoroughly cured" during their stay in the water cure resort; thus, "satisfied with the benefits received." He treated diseases without prescribing any "dose of medicine," that was "abnormal and unnatural," but instead, he made use of ten natural "substances or instrumentalities" which were: "First, air; second, food; third, water; fourth, sunlight; fifth, dress; sixth, exercise; seventh, sleep; eighth, rest; ninth, social influences; tenth, mental powers."<sup>53</sup>

Though Dansville was a good place to recover using natural therapies, James was making slow progress and was "unable to rest or sleep" for several nights. Ellen considered "the most distressing" experience of James's illness to be seeing "that the

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<sup>51</sup> Caswell, "Behavior Changes after Stroke," 28. James seemed not to be affected cognitively but showed an alteration in his personality where he became more easily irritated, anxious, dependent in a certain way, etc. "Some survivors experience apathy and don't seem to care about anything. 'People often mistake this for depression because survivors are content to sit and stare at the wall all day,' says Dr. Spradlin. 'The best response is to get them active and moving. Give them a choice of what to do or where to go, but make it clear they have to choose to do something, they can't just lie in bed.'... There is life after stroke, but you have to stay active and stay around people" (Caswell, 28–29).

<sup>52</sup> James White, "Note," *RH*, October 10, 1865, 150; cf. James White, "My Condition," *RH*, November 7, 1865, 180; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White* 2:119–121. J. Loughborough and others were with James in Dansville (Loughborough, "Report from Bro. Longhborough," *RH*, October 10, 1865, 149; G., untitled note, *RH*, September 19, 1865, 128; Loughborough, "Sketches of the Past — No. 132," *PUR*, November 21, 1912, 1–2).

<sup>53</sup> James C. Jackson, *How to Treat the Sick Without Medicine* (Dansville, NY: Austin, Jackson & Co., 1870), 1, 25–26; cf. 30–114.

courage, hope, and buoyancy of spirits which had sustained [James] were failing.” Thus Ellen, for the first time, thought about leaving Dansville and going back home to treat James in their “large and convenient house at Battle Creek, with its high and airy rooms” and abundance of water.<sup>54</sup>

Moreover, not everything in Dansville was in accordance with the Whites’ faith. Some amusements there were not safe, in Ellen’s opinion. Methods employed to keep the minds of the patients from their physical woes, such as, once a week “recreative dancing,”<sup>55</sup> card playing, theatergoing, and the ideas there advanced that the Whites were “too intensely religious,” and that was the reason they were “invalids,” were not admitted by Ellen.<sup>56</sup> When she saw the poor situation her husband was in and his inability to make good decisions, she took charge of the situation in order to save him. She feared that the secular environment in the institution would enfeeble James in exercising the “faith necessary to his restoration.”<sup>57</sup>

Without talking to James, to avoid distressing him, Ellen began to pray for guidance on the matter. “The more earnestly I prayed,” she penned, “the stronger was the conviction fastened upon my mind that I must take my husband among his brethren.” Doctors were initially reluctant to let him go, but Ellen was decided. Though the trip was

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<sup>54</sup> Ellen G. White, “Our Late Experience,” *RH*, February 27, 1866, 97; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White* 2:123–124.

<sup>55</sup> James C. Jackson, *Dancing: Its Evils and Its Benefits* (Dansville, NY: Austin, Jackson & Co., 1868), 12.

<sup>56</sup> Ellen G. White, “Reminiscent Account of the Experience of James White’s Sickness and Recovery,” *Ms* 1, 1867; idem, “Our Late Experience,” *RH*, February 20, 1866, 90; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White* 2:121–122; cf. Ronald L. Numbers, “Dr. Jackson’s Water Cure and Its Influence on Adventist Health Reform,” *Adventist Heritage* 1.1 (Jan 1974): 59.

<sup>57</sup> D. Robinson, *The Story of Our Health Message*, 195–197.

not short, she had already made plans to stop in some cities along the way. When James heard about the plans to leave, “he said not a word.” The morning they moved did not seem an ideal one. The night before they “had a drizzling rain storm.” James “began to manifest anxiety to go to Rochester.” That night James “slept none,” and the morning “looked rather discouraging in regard to taking out a sick man.” But Ellen decided on going, and wrote, “We chose rather to risk the consequences of going than staying after we had made the decision to go.”<sup>58</sup> Thus, they left Dansville and headed to Battle Creek, stopping in Rochester, New York, to rest for a few days.<sup>59</sup>

In Rochester James began a struggle between faith and depression,<sup>60</sup> but the message was that “[h]e must cease thinking and talking about himself as much as possible. He should be cheerful and happy,” and cease carrying “an unforgiving spirit toward those brethren who have injured his influence in the cause of God.”<sup>61</sup>

Despite James’s poor physical condition and inability to attend the GC Session, he was re-elected president of the GC and president of the Publishing Association in 1866.<sup>62</sup> Arthur Spalding, analyzing these elections, concludes that it was a mark of

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<sup>58</sup> Ellen G. White, “Our Late Experience,” *RH*, February 27, 1866, 98.

<sup>59</sup> *idem*, *Testimonies*, 1:616; [*idem*], “Vision Regarding ‘Our Home’—Dansville, New York,” Ms 5, 1866. The entire Manuscript explains the main motives why the Whites left Dansville; cf. *idem*, *Testimonies*, 1:615–620.

<sup>60</sup> “During the three weeks that we were in Rochester, much of the time was spent in prayer. . . . It seemed to be a struggle with the powers of darkness. Sometimes the trembling faith of my husband would grasp the promises of God, and sweet and precious was the victory then enjoyed. Then again his mind seemed depressed, and to be too weak to hold the victory he had gained.” (*idem*, “Our Late Experience,” *RH*, February 27, 1866, 98).

<sup>61</sup> First quote from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:620, second quote from 1:613.

<sup>62</sup> J. Byington and U. Smith, “Fourth Annual Session of General Conference,” *RH*, May 22, 1866, 196–197; G. W. Amadon and J. M. Aldrich, “Sixth Annual Meeting of the S.D.A. Publishing Association,” *RH*, May 22, 1866, 197–198; J[ames] White, “Note from Bro. White,” *RH*, May 22, 1866, 200.

confidence, but also indicated dependence on James, “for there was no other whose grasp of the work equaled his.”<sup>63</sup>

During this time, while James was “making a very gradual recovery,” Ellen’s “prime interest” was “her husband’s recovery”; therefore, her “attention was given almost wholly to his care.”<sup>64</sup> Writing to her son Edson she said, “I shall stand by your father in his efforts to overcome. I know that he has a hard struggle and needs the help of God.”<sup>65</sup>

However, Ellen feared losing James to death. While away from James for a few days visiting her father who was very weak, she penned, “I am alone. The strong, manly arm I have ever leaned upon is not now my support.” Then she sorrowfully continued, “Tears are my meat night and day. My spirit is constantly bowed down by grief. I cannot consent that your father shall go down into the grave.” She ended by crying out for help of God: “Oh, that God would pity and heal him.”<sup>66</sup>

In order to assist in James’s recovery and improve his health, the Whites purchased a piece of farmland in Greenville, Michigan, where they could be away from the stress of work and troubles in Battle Creek.<sup>67</sup> In the countryside, Ellen did all she

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<sup>63</sup> Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 1:359.

<sup>64</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:153.

<sup>65</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 6) December 8, 1866; quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:156.

<sup>66</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 16) October 14, 1866; quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:155–156.

<sup>67</sup> Hickerson, “The Homes of James and Ellen White,” 105–106; Hickerson and Campbell, “Homes of James and Ellen G. White.”

could to save her husband. She used “her tact and her creativity working in harmony with her dedication,” exercising him in mental and physical activities.<sup>68</sup>

It is interesting to note that taking care of James was something that Ellen saw as “not only a duty but a privilege.” She would not have exchanged this period for any other she had lived so far. “I felt,” she penned,

such a degree of the peace of God, and the consolations of his Spirit in the happy performance of my duty that I can say from the heart that I would not exchange the blessings and valuable experience I have obtained during the last six months, for those of the same length of time in any former period of my life.<sup>69</sup>

For her, it was a way to thank James for all he had done for her in the many times of her afflictions. “I have been nearly all my life an invalid,” she concluded, “and tenderly, and patiently has he sympathized with and watched over, and taken care of me when I was suffering, and now my turn had come to repay in a small measure the attention and kind offices I had received.”<sup>70</sup>

Studies have revealed that the impact of a stroke is not limited to the one who suffers it, but extends to close loved ones; the patient’s spouse becomes particularly vulnerable.<sup>71</sup> Apathy and indifference to anything is a common behavior change after stroke. Researchers have pointed out that depression is considered the most common post-stroke psychiatric condition, and also affects a third to a half of caregivers for stroke

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<sup>68</sup> Knight, *Walking with Ellen White*, 38–40; see Ellen G. White, “On Various Phases of Medical-Missionary Work,” Ms 50, 1902 (Statement made April 13, 1902, at a council meeting at Elmshaven, St. Helena, California); idem, *Selected Messages*, 2:306–308; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:188.

<sup>69</sup> Ellen G. White, “Our Late Experience,” *RH*, February 27, 1866, 97.

<sup>70</sup> Ellen G. White, “Our Late Experience,” *RH*, February 27, 1866, 97; idem, “Early Counsels on Medical Work—No. 4,” *RH*, April 23, 1914, 3; cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:124.

<sup>71</sup> P. Draper and H. Brocklehurst, “The Impact of Stroke on the Well-being of the Patient’s Spouse: An Exploratory Study,” *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 16.2 (2007): 264–271.



patients.<sup>72</sup> Since caregivers are so vulnerable to depression, it is important that they take care of themselves, because “depression in stroke caregivers worsens the patients’s depressive symptoms and predicts poor responses of patients to rehabilitation.”<sup>73</sup> The caregiver needs to be healthy and help the patient to be active and exercise physically, socially, and cognitively. That was the role played by Ellen White during James’s recovery.

The time of James’s breakdown revealed Ellen White’s leadership. She took in her hands the decisions that needed to be made at that moment. She was very active, “untiringly and devotedly” caring for her husband after his stroke, before going to Dansville, while there in the medical institution, and after leaving Dansville. Ellen realized with a sense of responsibility, care, and love toward her husband that others “did not understand the feebleness” of James, but she did.<sup>74</sup>

### Additional Strokes

James repeatedly returned to a busy schedule and suffered other strokes after the main one in 1865. It is not easy to pinpoint the exact dates and times of these strokes, but it is clear that he had several other minor ones. James mentioned in 1871 “a second partial shock of paralysis” in which he had

labored from that time to the present with increasing difficulty in the head, increasing nervousness, and an increasing pressure upon the spirits. We sleep

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<sup>72</sup> Beth Han and William E. Haley, “Family Caregiving for Patients with Stroke: Review and Analysis, *Stroke* 30.7 (1999): 1479, 1482.

<sup>73</sup> Han and Haley, 1478.

<sup>74</sup> Ellen G. White, “Reminiscent Account of the Experience of James White’s Sickness and Recovery,” Ms 1, 1867.

imperfectly, and not more than one half as much as we should. We suffer much pain in the arm and hand that were paralyzed six years since.<sup>75</sup>

In 1873, a period when James was “feeling very poorly and . . . much dispirited,” and having a hard time sleeping,<sup>76</sup> he mentioned a “fourth shock of paralysis, greater than the two preceding ones,”<sup>77</sup> even though he affirmed in 1879 that his “nervous system has been shocked three times with paralysis, and three times” his arm had “fallen, for a time to be raised and moved only by the other.”<sup>78</sup> Jerry Moon and Denis Kaiser mention a “fourth stroke of paralysis, April 22, 1873, and a fifth one on May 13.”<sup>79</sup> Ellen and William White referred to a stroke James suffered in 1877. “The next morning [August 19, 1877], at about half past six,” Ellen penned, “[James] was attacked with giddiness and was threatened with paralysis,” and this incident “was followed by great physical and mental prostration.”<sup>80</sup> In August 1881, probably on the day before he died, he “suffered another stroke of brain paralysis,” which, according to Dr. Kellogg, meant that if he “should live, his mind would be permanently enfeebled.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> [James White], “An Explanation,” *RH*, August 29, 1871, 88.

<sup>76</sup> Ellen G. White, “Diary,” April, Ms 6, 1873.

<sup>77</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “Permanency of the Cause,” *RH*, July 8, 1873, 29; cf. Ellen G. White, “Diary,” Ms 6, April, 1873.

<sup>78</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “Grow Old Gracefully,” *RH*, May 15, 1879, 156.

<sup>79</sup> Moon and Kaiser, “For Jesus and Scripture: The Life of Ellen G. White,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 48.

<sup>80</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 4:277; [William C. White] to J. Edson White, February 15, 1921, 7, DF 780, folder 5, no. 17, CAR-AU.

<sup>81</sup> V. Robinson, *James White*, 297, 299.

Pondering his health issues and sufferings, James once enumerated his mistakes that led to the strokes, “the rod of God”<sup>82</sup>:

1. In laboring beyond measure, the last twenty-five years, which has finally prostrated a powerful constitution. Mrs. W. and myself have labored and cared for others’ good, and have economized, and suffered for want of rest, and the comfort of life, to help others, and push forward the cause, greatly to our own loss, and to the loss of the cause that now needs our experience and help. ...

2. In moving from Greenville, in 1869, to Battle Creek, and accepting burdens then urged upon us. We had retired in consequence of the first shock of palsy, and had become nearly restored, and should have turned a deaf ear to the entreaties of friends to return to Battle Creek. ...

3. In consenting to accept offices and responsibilities in the cause, two years last February, after we had fully decided to refuse them. As the result, we had a *second shock, though light, from which we did not fully recover.*

4. In manifesting the same weakness, a year ago last January. ... And a *third slight shock* followed the arduous labors of that Conference, ...

5. In returning from California. We felt sure that we should have strength to refuse all positions of care and responsibility. We stood firm for two weeks, refusing to serve, after the brethren of the Publishing Association had elected us to the offices of President, and one of the editors. ... And as we can never accept responsibilities without taking on the burden of them, the result was a *fourth shock of paralysis, greater than the two preceding ones....*

6. And last, but not the least, we have made a sad mistake in letting our trials and griefs sink us in discouragement, and separate us from sweet communion with God (emphasis added).<sup>83</sup>

## Relational Difficulties between James and Ellen White

### Introduction

The letters exchanged by the White couple clearly express “the symbolic universe related to their marital life.” Moreover, they show the type of relationship they had “and how the couple handled their stresses and subsequent reconciliatory actions.” The study

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<sup>82</sup> Ellen G. White, “Diary,” Ms 7, May 1, 1873.

<sup>83</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “Permanency of the Cause,” *RH*, July 8, 1873, 28–29. “The stroke, while more severe than the previous two, was not as crippling as the first one he suffered in August, 1865” (Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:381).

of these documents produced by the couple is very meaningful, because it offers the opportunity to identify a deeper level of their relationship. This correspondence was written “without the expectation of publication, being of a private nature, and thus does not present evidence of speech that is merely laudatory or aimed at providing social satisfaction.”<sup>84</sup>

During the last sixteen years of their marriage, ending with James’s death in 1881, four major periods of turbulent relationship stress can be identified from the primary sources written by the couple: 1868, 1871, 1874, and 1876. In the last years before James died, another problem surfaced: the question of influence which will be described and briefly analyzed in the last part of this chapter dealing with James’s death.

1868

In one of the periods (1867–1868) when James was not the president of the GC, he wrote, “It must be regarded as one of the most active years of our lives.” According to him, he had “traveled by railroad, 3200 miles, and by private conveyance, going to, and returning from, appointments, about 2000 miles.” Both James and Ellen had “attended 260 meetings,” at which they usually were the main speakers. James had “presided in the examination of nearly two hundred candidates for baptism, and have baptized sixty-five.” During that time, they continued their ministry of writing hundreds of pages and their “principal mission” to rescue “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” James hoped that the following year would allow them “less fatigue and more time for rest.” However, their priority was the mission, that “the lost sheep must be found and borne to the fold, and, if

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<sup>84</sup> Demóstenes Neves da Silva and Gerson Rodrigues, “The Conjugal Experience of James and Ellen White: Meanings Built by the Couple,” *AUSS* 54.2 (2016), 265.

God will give us some part in this work, and strength to perform it, we cheerfully pursue our mission,”<sup>85</sup> penned James.

James had been released from church administrative affairs, but because of the intensity of the work and James’s ongoing recovery from the stroke of 1865, the couple experienced some tension. During the winter of 1867/1868, Ellen went through a stressful time where she acted and spoke in a way that she later regretted and asked her husband to forgive. The documents written by the couple during that time do not specify exactly what was causing the tension, but it is possible that James was requesting much attention and Ellen was not physically well and unable to give the attention he needed at the moment. A sick person can become very demanding and show a lack of concern for the caregiver or the caregiver’s feelings. In cases like this, it is recommended that caregivers set rules, eat healthy, and take time out of their day to exercise.<sup>86</sup>

This seems to have been the case with James, demanding more attention from his wife during a period of his recovery, and leading her to complain of almost daily headaches.<sup>87</sup> She was “sad and dispirited,” without courage, and “weighed down with anguish,” as she wrote in her diary,

No one, not even my husband, can have an understanding of my mind. He is a stranger to my trials, my temptations, my conflicts and buffetings. His own case occupies his mind, and I ought not to expect that appreciation of my peculiar position [that] my spirit so earnestly craves.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> James White, “Our Year’s Labor,” *RH*, May 12, 1868, 344.

<sup>86</sup> Sara Palmer and Jeffrey B. Palmer, *When Your Spouse Has a Stroke: Caring for Your Partner, Yourself, and Your Relationship* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

<sup>87</sup> See Ellen G. White, Mss. 12, 13, 14, 1868.

<sup>88</sup> Ellen G. White, “Diary,” Ms 13, February 1, 1868.

On the same day, she opened her heart: “I cry unto God for wisdom, grace, and power to control my spirit at all times and offend not in word. My lips shall not sin. I will keep my mouth with a bridle.” She then “wrote [her] mind to James, confessed [her] wrong in speaking and acting sometimes.”<sup>89</sup> A few days later she “resolved to be more watchful to speak carefully at all times”<sup>90</sup> to James, and admitted, “The burden of writing and other extra labors borne for the church have told upon me seriously. I feel that the enemy is getting advantage of me. I acknowledged to my husband I had erred.”<sup>91</sup>

James’s stroke affected his personality, causing him to demand more attention from his wife. However, it did not limit him physically (no major physical disability), nor did it cause aphasia (language disorders caused by damage to the brain) or memory loss that prevented him from writing or editing. After he rested and recovered for a year, inability to organize a text or poor memory were not evident in James’s articles and books, and conversations with James did not need to be repeated because of loss of memory. In 1867, Ellen wrote that James “was growing stronger, clearer, and more connected in his subjects,” and “seemed to manifest all that clearness of thought, good judgment, and faithfulness in dealing with the erring, of former days.”<sup>92</sup> This brought Ellen great relief and joy, and she enthusiastically penned, “Without him I could

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<sup>89</sup> Ellen G. White, “Diary,” Ms 13, February 1, 1868.

<sup>90</sup> Ellen G. White, “Diary,” Ms 13, February 12, 1868.

<sup>91</sup> Ellen G. White, “Diary” Ms 14, March 31, 1868.

<sup>92</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:570–571.

accomplish but little, but with his help, in the strength of God, I could do the work assigned me.”<sup>93</sup>

James agreed that their busy schedule was consuming his wife. “Since her return,” wrote James, Ellen “has injured her health and strength in confining herself too closely to this work. She usually writes from twenty to forty pages each day.”<sup>94</sup> They were “both laboring far beyond [their] strength.”<sup>95</sup> John Andrews pointed out, “Few of our public laborers perform as much of this kind of work [“preaching and exhorting in the public assemblies”] as Bro. and Sr. White,” and “many hours which they need for rest are given to wearisome writing, or to careful pains-taking effort to help those who have involved themselves in trouble.”<sup>96</sup> Ellen reached a point of exhaustion where she “came near having a shock of paralysis.” “My brain was so weary,” affirmed Ellen, “I could not keep my balance any better than a drunken person. . . . I fear I am breaking down.”<sup>97</sup>

## Menopause

During those days Ellen faced a difficult time regarding her health and vitality because “she was passing through menopause.”<sup>98</sup> She described being “unable to labor in the cause of God or to engage in the most simple labor of the household” and she felt it “would determine in a short period [her] chances of life or death.” Her “vitality” was “at

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<sup>93</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:575.

<sup>94</sup> James White, “Two Months Behind,” *RH*, March 3, 1868, 192.

<sup>95</sup> Ellen G. White, “Diary” Ms 15, 1868 (April 23).

<sup>96</sup> J. N. Andrews, “The Labors of Bro. and Sr. White,” *RH*, March 3, 1868, 184.

<sup>97</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 11) March 30, 1868, 2.

<sup>98</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:272, 329; cf. *A Critique of the Book Prophetess of Health*, 85; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 472; Numbers, *The Prophetess of Health* (2008), 242.

a low ebb,” and history was not on her side; her sister Sarah had “died passing through this critical time.” Ellen was suffering “much pain,” and pondered, “How I shall come out I cannot tell.”<sup>99</sup>

Though medical interest in menopause increased significantly in the nineteenth century, it was seen mostly in a negative way. Historically, the Victorian image of menopause in the nineteenth century “was an aging woman with a decaying body, prone to illness and insanity.”<sup>100</sup> It was considered a “critical time ... marked by debility,” in which “all constitutional affections will be increased by the change of life, and that an impulse will be given to cancer, gout [a type of arthritis], or consumption.”<sup>101</sup> The “best line of treatment for a woman at the menopause” was considered to be relieving “the patient ... if possible, from care, — from burdens, either mental or physical.”<sup>102</sup>

1871

The beginning of the 1870s was not a calm and resting time for the White couple. In the spring of 1870, James was elected president of the Board of Directors of the

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<sup>99</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 6) June 10, 1869. Probably relating to that, she said, “I am suffering with infirmities. I may not live long, yet I do not feel anxious in the matter. It may be my death will serve the cause of God better than my life; if so I choose the grave” (Ellen G. White to John N. Loughborough, [Lt 10] August 15, 1869).

<sup>100</sup> Aila Collins, “Sociocultural Issues in Menopause,” in *International Position Paper on Women’s Health and Menopause: A Comprehensive Approach*, ed. Nanette K. Wenger et al. (n.p.: National Institutes of Health, July 2002), 65; cf. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985), 182–196.

<sup>101</sup> Edward John Tilt, *The Change of Life in Health and Disease: A Practical Treatise on the Nervous and Other Affections Incidental to Women and the Decline of Life*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: John Churchill and Sons, 1870), 80–81; reprint (Philadelphia, PA: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1871), 92–93. The term “change of life” was a synonym of “Climacteria,” “Critical time,” “Turn of life,” “Menopause,” etc., and was “understood to mean a certain period of time, beginning with those irregularities which precede the last appearance of the menstrual flow, and ending with the recovery of health” (Tilt, [London], [1]; Tilt, [Philadelphia], [17]).

<sup>102</sup> “The Menopause,” *Good Health*, January, 1902, 60–61.



Institute, which was facing heavy financial difficulties.<sup>103</sup> During part of the summer and fall the Whites attended twelve camp meetings in different states.<sup>104</sup> In December Ellen wrote about the busy year and heavy load on James's shoulders,

Your Father has all the burdens he can stand up under at the present time. I sometimes fear the result of such constant, long, continued labors upon his part; but what can be done? There is no one qualified to take his place. If he leaves to be gone a few days, there are many things [that] go wrong and then he is much perplexed.<sup>105</sup>

She also wrote about his poor health condition, "Your Father has been afflicted with cold and cough. His lungs were congested. ... He could not cease labor for even a day; therefore we had to work at considerable disadvantage."<sup>106</sup> In the late fall of 1870, James was working from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week, and speaking on Sabbaths, filling "the places of two business men, two editors, one minister, besides having the care of a family of fourteen, including our helpless mother aged eighty-two, and father aged eighty-five."<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 110; "The Health Institute," *RH*, January 18, 1870, 32. At this time James was president of the General Conference (Ja[me]s White and U. Smith, "Business Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Session of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists," *RH*, March 22, 1870, 109–110), the Missionary Society (Ja[me]s White and U[riah] Smith, "First Annual Meeting of the S. D. A. Missionary Society," *RH*, March 22, 1870, 106), and the Publishing House (James White and E. S. Walker, "S. D. A. Publishing Association," *RH*, March 22, 1870, 106).

<sup>104</sup> James White, "Health Reform.—No. 2," *HR* (Dec. 1870), 110–111. Cf. *idem*, "Eastern Tour," *RH*, October 4, 1870, 125; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:290–296; Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 14) September 27, 1870.

<sup>105</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 22) December 16, 1870.

<sup>106</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 19) November 27, 1870.

<sup>107</sup> J[ames] W[hite] "The Future," *RH*, January 10, 1871, 32; cf. Ellen G. White to Cousin Reed, (Lt 20) 1870; cf. Ellen G. White to Sanford and Jane "Jennie" or Jenny" Rogers, (Lt 23) November 25, 1870.

Ellen also was very busy and weak.<sup>108</sup> On a trip by boat up the Mississippi River, James wrote about his wife,

The day is very hot; Mrs. W. is writing. Poor woman! This almost eternal writing for this one and that, when she should rest, and enjoy the beautiful scenery, and the pleasant society, seems too bad, but God blesses and sustains, and we must be reconciled.<sup>109</sup>

Moreover, James felt that both he and Ellen had to be more present in the field because other leaders, such as “Elders Butler and Haskell have been doing sad work.”<sup>110</sup> This attitude of distrusting others and needing to be the rescuer added to the heavy load on James’s shoulders. Writing several years later, he regretted the financial losses incurred by the SDA institutions while he was incapable of being on the frontline.

The paralytic stroke [1865] had so far touched the brain that for eighteen months we carried neither watch nor purse. And for the four years that immediately followed the war, we did not bear responsibilities at headquarters. During this time, sad changes took place at Battle Creek, in the spiritual and financial condition of things. Although it was the best time to do business in the history of the cause, not less than \$20,000 was lost during that four years, at the Publishing House and Health Institute, when \$30,000 should have been earned.<sup>111</sup>

In the beginning of 1871, James “came to the rescue” of the *Health Reformer*. He assumed editorship until July 1874, when Dr. John H. Kellogg “was made editor in chief.”<sup>112</sup> In that same year he was reelected president of both the GC and the Publishing

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<sup>108</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 13) September 23, 1870; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 24) September 1870.

<sup>109</sup> James White, “Western Tour,” *RH*, July 5, 1870, 21; quoted in the introduction of *Testimonies*, 2:8.

<sup>110</sup> James White to William C. White, Lucinda Hall, May (Mary) and Anna, June 17, 1870.

<sup>111</sup> James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880), 394; V. Robinson, *James White*, 228; cf. Wheeler, *James White*, 175.

<sup>112</sup> James White, “The Health Reformer,” *HR*, March 1871, 173; Harold M. Walton and Kathryn J. Nelson, *Historical Sketches of the Medical Work of Seventh-day Adventists from 1866 to 1896*

Association, and editor of the *RH*.<sup>113</sup> All these responsibilities made it impossible for James to rest at all,<sup>114</sup> and the result was another stroke. Though this one was softer than the one in 1865, this “second partial shock of paralysis” caused “much pain in the arm and hand” and forced James to labor “from that time to the present with increasing difficulty in the head, increasing nervousness, and an increasing pressure upon the spirits.” Moreover, he could not sleep “more than one half as much as we [James White] should.”<sup>115</sup> Six months before, James had written about the benefits of the health reform and the changes he had made in “wrong habits of life.”<sup>116</sup> The alterations, however, were not enough. He paid the price for this workaholic lifestyle. A few days before the partial stroke, Ellen had said that her husband was “a used up man,” and she felt “so sorry” that their usefulness was gone.<sup>117</sup>

James’s affliction, the amount of work he continued doing, lack of sleep, and his separation from Ellen, who had to travel without him, fueled some conflicts with other church leaders and led him to accuse Ellen of not being by his side but defending others instead. The letters in which he made these accusations were not preserved, but Ellen’s answer makes it clear that she did not agree with it. She pointed out that James had not

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(Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 44. James White recognized that his connection with the *Health Reformer* “was a matter of necessity rather than choice” (James White, “The Health Reformer,” *HR*, July 1874, 194).

<sup>113</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:315–316; [James White], “The Future,” *RH*, August 1, 1871, 56.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. [James White], “The Future,” *RH*, August 1, 1871, 56; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 3:91; idem, Ms 3, 1871.

<sup>115</sup> [James White], “An Explanation,” *RH*, August 29, 1871, 88.

<sup>116</sup> James White, “Health Reform.—No. 3,” *Health Reformer*, January 1871, 132.

<sup>117</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 11) June 16, 1871.

perceived things in the right way and had fed an unforgiving spirit, and she rebuked him for weakening the confidence of church members in their leaders.

My dear husband, I have read and reread your long letter, but I think you are not looking in the right direction for freedom. . . . You have accused me repeatedly of having more sympathy for Brethren Waggoner and Andrews than for yourself. I know that is not true. . . . May God help me in this fearful, painfully fearful, time. I am in distress of mind [as to] why God does not reveal Himself to you. I cannot say, but I fear it is because you do not forget the darkness of the past, but gather darkness, unbelief and infidelity by talking over the disagreeable past. Oh, that you would be entreated to forgive and forget. . . . Do not gather sin to your own soul by destroying the confidence of the people of God in two of His servants who are responsible men and who have experience in this work. . . . Dear husband, when you weaken the confidence of God's people in their leaders, you weaken the cause of God. The minds of the people are left in uncertainty. . . . I cannot engage in the work in making prominent the weakness and errors of God's people. . . . I cannot violate my conscience in pursuing a course which will please you when I have the clearest evidence that God would not be honored. . . . I beg of you, cease to afflict your soul over unnecessary things. It does seem to me that you might be a free man if you would. . . . I have seen that yourself was in great danger of losing your reward of all your labor by becoming a rebellious murmurer.<sup>118</sup>

During that time, Ellen, had an interview with Dr. Dio Lewis, a physician and prominent temperance reformer in Boston, to “understand better the effects of overwork and to learn how to help” her debilitated husband.<sup>119</sup> Dr. Lewis explained things to Ellen that she confessed she “had not before understood.”<sup>120</sup> Dr. Lewis faced the same challenges as James, and when he described his situation, Ellen could draw parallels with her husband and comprehend things she had not fully understood before. She heard that excess of work put a person “in danger of losing the balance and control of his mind,” and when business was the main subject of discussion, the affected person easily became

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<sup>118</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 13) September 2, 1871; cf. Graybill, “The Power of Prophecy,” 33–34.

<sup>119</sup> “Lewis, Dio,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 449.

<sup>120</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 15) November 15, 1871.

“irritated and provoked.” Dr. Lewis pointed out that in his own experience, he could normally work or lecture, but at the same time could “get mad fifty times a day at the most simple question asked” and “in the kindest manner.”

As Ellen understood more about “this mental infirmity,”<sup>121</sup> she sent letters to her sons explaining matters and counseling them. She rightly pointed out to Willie that James’s case was similar to what she heard from Lewis. Being in Battle Creek was not helping James.

Willie, I am thoroughly convinced that your father should not stay for any length of time at Battle Creek. Again, I am convinced that we should endeavor to perplex Father as little as possible. Father is happy, cheerful and free. I believe that he should have had a change ere this, but I failed to bring it about. Father, has, I believe, been very nearly unbalanced in some directions. But we may save his brain from permanent disease and insanity by a judicious course. We must be cheerful. We must be happy and patient and not be easily grieved or discouraged or disappointed, if Father cannot do exactly as we feel that he might. We must consider the business care, the continual, wearing tax upon his brain for twenty-five years. Yes, my son, we must look at these things carefully, candidly, and prayerfully.<sup>122</sup>

To Edson and Emma, she wrote, “Your father’s mind was worn. He did not know how much.... I had labored for months to get father away from his business cares, but he thought it was impossible.” Thus she appealed, “I see that we must all be more careful of our words and actions when Father is overwhelmed with care.”<sup>123</sup>

Ellen felt responsible to practice the light she received from Dr. Lewis. “I hope to make a right use of all the light and knowledge I can obtain,” she wrote, adding that James “has been overworked. A strain has been upon his brain so long that he feels it. I

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<sup>121</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 17) November 10, 1871.

<sup>122</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 17) November 10, 1871.

<sup>123</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 15) November 15, 1871.

feel thankful that he is not entirely broken, that he may yet recover or at least escape entire shipwreck.”<sup>124</sup> During this time, James also celebrated the healing of Ellen from suffering “from painful and discouraging evidence of a growing cancer in the breast.”<sup>125</sup>

1874

James mentioned in 1871 another “partial shock of paralysis” which made it hard for him to labor or sleep, and that hurt him both physically and emotionally.<sup>126</sup> In early 1872, James had “been a great sufferer.” He was “threatened with paralysis in his right arm and limb” and was “not be able to exercise his brain in the least perplexing matters.” The situation forced Ellen to go “weeks without a full night’s rest” treating him.<sup>127</sup> At the end of the year, James reflected on his own life and wrote a booklet showing the blessings of God in his life and how he had abused them and not listened carefully to God’s message, which resulted in periods of paralysis, pain, and incapability of working.<sup>128</sup>

In the spring of 1873, James again was “feeling very poorly and ... much dispirited,” and having a hard time sleeping,<sup>129</sup> which led to another “shock of paralysis,

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<sup>124</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 17) November 10, 1871.

<sup>125</sup> [James White], “Eastern Tour,” *RH*, November 14, 1871; cf. Ellen G. White to W. H. Ball, (Lt 28) February 27, 1872; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:329.

<sup>126</sup> [James White], “An Explanation,” *RH*, August 29, 1871, 88.

<sup>127</sup> Ellen G. White to W. H. Ball, (Lt 4) April 11, 1872; Ellen G. White, *Testimony to the Church at Battle Creek* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of SDAs, 1872), 116.

<sup>128</sup> James White, *A Solemn Appeal to the Ministry*.

<sup>129</sup> Ellen G. White, “Diary,” April, Ms 6, 1873.

greater than the two preceding ones.”<sup>130</sup> Despite his poor health he was president of the Publishing Association, editor of the *Review and Herald*, and moreover, was requested by “unanimous vote” (although not expected to reside in Battle Creek much of the time) “to assume the pastoral care” of the Battle Creek Tabernacle, to which “he acceded.”<sup>131</sup>

Ellen described her health at this time as “quite good except rush of blood to the head and inflammation of the eyes,” while James was “quite strong.”<sup>132</sup> However, his daily schedule included “much writing night after night ... up until midnight,” which, based on experience, Ellen did not think was “a good plan.”<sup>133</sup> Ellen also was quite busy writing, but because of her inflammation of the eyes, she was able to write only moderately during daylight. James believed he should be in Battle Creek, while Ellen thought he should be working out of doors, in a place where “the multiplicity of cares and burdens” would not devolve upon him.<sup>134</sup>

On June 4, 1874, James published the first issue of the *Signs of the Times* in Oakland, CA. He was the first editor, and his name appeared as editor on the masthead

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<sup>130</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “Permanency of the Cause,” *RH*, July 8, 1873, 29; cf. Ellen G. White, “Diary,” April, Ms 6, 1873; Moon and Kaiser, “For Jesus and Scripture: The Life of Ellen G. White,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 48. James refers to two minor strokes in the previous year, but not the one in 1865.

<sup>131</sup> J. N. A[ndrews], “Meetings at Battle Creek Since the Conference,” *RH*, December 2, 1873, 196.

<sup>132</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 7) January 25, 1874; cf. Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 8) February 7, 1874.

<sup>133</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 9) February 7, 1874.

<sup>134</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 12) February 15, 1874; cf. Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 17) March 20, 1874.

until his death. He then began working to open a publishing house on the West Coast.<sup>135</sup> Because they needed money to establish the publishing office in California and James was sick, Ellen decided, with his permission, though he was not happy with the idea, to go to the eastern camp meetings to raise funds. “As burdens multiplied and problems pertaining to the new publication crowded in, discouragement and gloom overtook” James. He developed a spirit of being “suspicious and [began] to lay blame on others for situations that either did not exist or that he had created.”<sup>136</sup> This also led James to try to control Ellen’s work and decisions, which she could not allow. Their grandson, Arthur White, suggests, “The conflict was not in their marriage, as is shown by frequent expressions of affection, but in keeping their special God-appointed interests separate.”<sup>137</sup> However, this conflict seems to have made it somewhat more “difficult for [James] and Ellen to work together.”<sup>138</sup>

James’s letters to Ellen from this stressful time are not extant, but Ellen’s straightforward responses indicate that probably James was suffering from being incapable to accompany his wife, which led to a certain degree of insecurity, resulting in complains to Ellen and mistrust and jealousy of others.<sup>139</sup> His mechanism of defense was trying to control Ellen’s work. James thus criticized Ellen and tried to convert her to his own perspective. “I mean to help you what I can, but don’t let the enemy make you think

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<sup>135</sup> J[ames] W[hite], *An Earnest Appeal* [S.l.: s.n., 187-?], 18–19; Harold O. McCumber, *The Advent Message in the Golden West* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1968), 85–86; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 19a) April 28, 1874.

<sup>136</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:430.

<sup>137</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:431.

<sup>138</sup> Graybill, “The Power of Prophecy,” 37.

<sup>139</sup> This subject is analyzed below in this research.



only of my deficiencies,” penned Ellen to James, “which are, you think, so apparent, for in trying to fix me over you may destroy my usefulness, my freedom, and bring me into a position of restraint, of embarrassment, that will unfit me for the work of God.”<sup>140</sup>

James blamed others for his depressed state of mind and seemed also to blame his wife. “You must not accuse me of causing the trials of your life, because in this you deceive your own soul,” wrote Ellen. “Am I to blame for this?” Her concern was with James’s health:

And it is not so much that I am afflicted with your distrust and suspicions of me that troubles me, but that you let it afflict you. It wears upon your health, and I am unable to remove the cause because it does not exist in reality. ... [God] has given me great light for His people, and I must be free to follow the leadings of the Spirit of God and go at His bidding, relying upon the light and sense of duty I feel, and leave you the same privilege. When we can work the best together we will do so. If God says it is for His glory we work apart occasionally, we will do that. But God is willing to show me my work and my duty and I shall look to Him in faith and trust Him fully to lead me.”<sup>141</sup>

In another letter written by Ellen in July 8, she brings again the same point.

I am trying to draw nigh to God. I receive great comfort in prayer. I feel so thankful for the evidence that God hears and blesses me, unworthy as I am. I never felt so entirely free from hurry and nervousness as for the last four weeks. ... I will not allow feelings of sadness and depression to destroy my usefulness. I do not forget you. I feel deeply sorry that you have things in your mind just as they are in regard to me. I can say I know you view things in a perverted light. I have in the past felt so depressed and saddened with the thought that it might be so, that life has seemed a burden. But I don’t feel so now. ... Things seem an unexplainable mystery—that you cannot find rest and peace unless you succeed in bringing me into positions I cannot see and cannot possibly submit to be placed in. I see no consistency or generosity in this, only a feeling prompted by selfishness in persistently dwelling upon things that tend to alienate our hearts rather than to unite them.

I long for perfect union, but I cannot purchase it at the expense of my conscience; but if you feel that God is leading you in dwelling upon the things you

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<sup>140</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 34) June 21, 1874.

<sup>141</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 38) July 2, 1874; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:432–434.

have dwelt upon in your letters, I will try to feel all right towards you. ... God wants you to live. I want you to live and I want that our last days shall be our very best days. ... I have perfect confidence in God. ... If we have to walk apart the rest of the way, do let us not seek to pull each other down. I do believe it is best for our labors to be disconnected and we each lean upon God for ourselves.<sup>142</sup>

Two days later, Ellen added,

If you could come east and let all the difficulties and perplexities of the past entirely alone, we might unite our efforts and great good might be done here and at the camp meetings. But I think if your mind is so constituted that it will dwell upon things that are unpleasant, it would be better for the cause and better for you to remain where you are. ... But if you are coming to discourage and weaken yourself and me by censure and suspicion and jealousy, I fear we should do great injury to the cause of God.

I long to see you and would be so glad to bury the past as I know God would have us, without making reference to it, and to take hold in faith and courage with you to do our duty and work to help the people of God; but I must be left free to follow the convictions of my own conscience. I will not blame or censure you, and I cannot have you take the life and soul out of me by your blaming and censuring me. May the Lord bless, heal, and lead you is my daily prayer. I must be free in God. He wants me to be free and not suffering under a load of depressing discouragements that unfit me for any position.<sup>143</sup>

Letters written by James and Ellen after July 10, 1874, indicate that Ellen's letters helped James to "see matters in their true light," and to put a "positive tone" into his letters.<sup>144</sup> In August, James arrived in Battle Creek to attend the Michigan camp meeting with Ellen. During the GC Session in 1874, he was once again elected president of the GC,<sup>145</sup> a position he held until 1880.

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<sup>142</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 40) July 8, 1874; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:434–437.

<sup>143</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 40a) July 10, 1874; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 437–438.

<sup>144</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:440–442.

<sup>145</sup> G. I. Butler and S. Brownsberger, "Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Gen. Conf. of S. D. Adventists," *RH*, August 25, 1874, 75. At the same time James signed notes in the *RH* as president of other church offices (James White, Pres. S. D. A. P[ublishing] A[ssociation], "The Signs of the Times," *RH*, Sept. 15, 1874, 104; idem, Pres. Board of Directors, "The School at Battle Creek," *RH*, Sept.

James could not be present at the following eastern camp meetings because responsibilities in Battle Creek were too demanding. Once again Ellen traveled without him, and there are letters from this time showing further stress in their marriage. As the newly elected president of the GC, James turned his attention to the institutions in Battle Creek, especially the developments at the Battle Creek College. He was impressed with the challenges of “the responsibilities of a worldwide mission,” the sending of workers to new fields both in North America and overseas, and the publication of material in foreign languages.<sup>146</sup> In 1874 the SDAs opened the Battle Creek College<sup>147</sup> and officially sent their first missionary overseas.<sup>148</sup>

1876

During 1875, the Whites together attended the Midwestern camp meetings. They were “of the best of courage,” and James was in good spirits and did “not let anything depress him”; thus, the couple had been “harmoniously working with the armor on since [they] left B[attle] C[reek] for California.”<sup>149</sup>

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15, 1874, 104). Uriah Smith points out that James White, in 1874, was “president of their five leading [SDA] organizations; namely, The General Conference, The Publishing Association, The Health Reform Institute, The General Tract and Missionary Society, and the Educational Society” (Uriah S[mith], “The Seventh-Day Adventists: A Brief Sketch of Their Origin, Progress, and Principles,” *RH*, November 3, 1874, 148).

<sup>146</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “The World-Wide Mission,” *RH*, August 25, 1874, 76; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:447–449.

<sup>147</sup> James served as Battle Creek College titular president from 1874 to 1880. (Wheeler, *James White*, pictures in pp.128–129). In 1872, SDAs had opened the Battle Creek School (“The S. D. A. School,” *RH*, June 11, 1872, 204).

<sup>148</sup> Geo. I. Butler, “Missionary to Europe,” *RH*, Sept. 15, 1874, 100; cf. J. N. Andrews, “Our Embarkation,” *RH*, September 22, 1874, 112; “The Cause in Europe,” *ST*, December 3, 1874, 76.

<sup>149</sup> Ellen G. White to George I. Butler, (Lt 16) June 6, 1875.

In 1876, nevertheless, there was a repetition of the tensions of 1874 between James and Ellen. They were residing in California when James was called east to attend some meetings and “oversee the proposed enlargement of the Health Institute.” James wanted Ellen to accompany him, but she did not want to leave her writing. Thus, he headed east without her. “Their letters (she wrote every day) indicated that there were some tensions, each certain they were in the line of duty, although acting somewhat independently.”<sup>150</sup> Letters written by Ellen to her closest friend Lucinda, who was in Battle Creek close to James, reveal that this was one of the most stressful periods in the Whites’s relationship.<sup>151</sup> In April 1876, Ellen once again made it clear that her submission was first and foremost to God:

I cannot make any move eastward without clear evidence of duty. God has given me my work and I desire to do it.

You are happy and never so free. Thank the Lord for this. I am so glad you feel thus. I am happy and free and I thank the Lord for this. You are in the line of duty. God blesses you. I am in the line of my duty and God blesses me. . . . Should I leave now to go east, I should go on your light, not on mine. . . . I would not do such injustice to myself or my husband by going. . . . I miss you and would love to be with you if this was the will of God, but He knoweth all things and will direct my path. . . . I am perfectly willing and very anxious to do the will of God. I have no wish or will of my own in this matter, but as yet see no duty east.<sup>152</sup>

Four letters written during May 10–17 expose in more detail some of the tensions.

On May 10, Ellen penned a confident and private letter to Lucinda.

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<sup>150</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:442.

<sup>151</sup> These letters were found in an old trunk in Michigan that was acquired by Susan Jaquette, and came to belong to the White Estate in 1973. The collection contained about 2000 letters of which 39 were written by Ellen and some by James (A. L. White, “Ellen White Letters Discovered in Historical Collection,” *RH*, August 16, 1973, 1, 10–11; Paul Gordon and Ron Graybill, “Letters to Lucinda: Excerpts from the Ellen White Messages Found in the Newly Discovered Collection,” *RH*, August 23, 1973, 4–7; E. G. White, *Daughters of God: Messages Especially for Women* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2005), 264. A brief historical-contextual analysis of these letters can be found in Ellen G. White, *Daughters of God*, 263–273; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:33–34; Graybill, “The Power of Prophecy,” 39–41.

<sup>152</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 11) April 20, 1876.

Lucinda, I have no idea now of exchanging a certainty for an uncertainty. ... Should I come east, James' happiness might suddenly change to complaining and fretting. ... The more I think of the matter the more settled and determined I am, unless God gives me light, to remain where I am. ... I must work as God should direct. ... If it is my duty to attend the camp meetings, I shall know it. ... I can but dread the liability of James' changeable moods, his strong feelings, his censures, his viewing me in the light he does, and has felt free to tell me his ideas of my being led by a wrong spirit, my restricting his liberty, et cetera. All this is not easy to jump over and place myself voluntarily in a position where he will stand in my way and I in his. ... God in His providence has given us each our work, and we will do it separately, independently. He is happy; I am happy; but the happiness might be all changed should we meet, I fear. ... I cannot endure the thought of marring the work and cause of God by such depression as I have experienced all unnecessarily. My work is at Oakland. I shall not move east one step unless the Lord says "Go." Then, without one murmur, I will cheerfully go, not before. A great share of my life's usefulness has been lost. If James had made retraction, it would be different. He has said we must not seek to control each other. I do not own to doing it, but he has, and much more. I never felt as I do now in this matter. I cannot have confidence in James' judgment in reference to my duty. He seems to want to dictate to me as though I was a child—tells me not to go here, I must come east for fear of Sister Willis' influence, or fearing that I should go to Petaluma, et cetera. I hope God has not left me to receive my duty through my husband. He will teach me if I trust in Him. ... I hope I have not written anything wrong, but these are just my feelings, and no one but you knows anything about it.<sup>153</sup>

Two days later, in another short letter to Lucinda, Ellen had more to say:

The Lord knows what is best for me, for James, and the cause of God. My husband is now happy. Blessed news! If he will only remain happy I would be willing to ever remain from him. If my presence is detrimental to his happiness God forbid I should ever be connected with him. ... I do not think my husband really desires my society. He would be glad for me to be present at the campmeetings but he has such views of me which he freely has expressed from time to time that I do not feel happy in his society and I never can till he views matters entirely differently. He charges a good share of his unhappiness upon me when he has made it himself by his own lack of self control.<sup>154</sup>

The same day, May 12, Ellen wrote to her husband, "I am glad you feel that it is best for me to remain in California and do my writings." She then described some matters

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<sup>153</sup> Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 64) May 10, 1876.

<sup>154</sup> Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 65) May 12, 1876.

at home, such as who was doing the cooking, how much she was paying for that, trying “to get a horse and carriage,” etc. And then she wrote more forthrightly,

In regard to my independence, I have had no more than I should have in the matter under the circumstances. I do not receive your views or interpretation of my feelings on this matter. I understand myself much better than you understand me. But so it must be and I will say no more in reference to the matter. I am glad you are free and happy and I rejoice that God has blessed me with freedom, with peace, and cheerfulness and courage.<sup>155</sup>

May 16 saw another open-hearted letter to Lucinda. The same complaints were exposed; James trying to dictate to Ellen while she was clear about her independence. Being away from each other was the best option for that moment, according to Ellen.

A letter received from my husband last night shows me that he is prepared to dictate to me and take positions more trying than ever before. I have decided to attend no camp meetings this season. I shall remain and write. My husband can labor alone best. I am sure I can. . . . I think he would be satisfied if he had the entire control of me, soul and body, but this he cannot have. I sometimes think he is not really a sane man, but I don't know. May God teach and lead and guide. His last letter has fully decided me to remain this side of the mountains. . . . He has felt called upon to write in regard to my danger of being deceived by Sister Willis, in regard to my being called to Petaluma, et cetera. I hope [that] when my husband left he did not take God with him and leave us to walk by the light of our own eyes and the wisdom of our own hearts. . . . Now, Lucinda, my course is clear. I shall not cross the plains this summer. I would be glad to bear my testimony in the meetings, but this cannot be without worse results than we could gain.<sup>156</sup>

In the same letter, Ellen quoted verbatim part of what James had written to her. In straightforward words, James appealed for his independence and the guidance of God in his life; he wrote that he was not inferior to Ellen in any way and his opinion had the same weight as Ellen's opinion, unless the message was direct from heaven. The letter to

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<sup>155</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 25) May 12, 1876.

<sup>156</sup> Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 66) May 16, 1876.

Lucinda also points out some disagreement between James and Ellen over the way they were dealing with their son Edson.

In his last [letter] he repeats [that] he does not want me to make any references to what he writes till "You see things differently. And be assured of this, that none of these things sink me down a hair. I shall be happy to meet you and Mary at the Kansas camp meeting provided that, with the exception of a direct revelation from God, you put me on a level with yourself. I will gladly come to that position and labor with you, but while entrusted with the supervision of the whole work I think it wrong to be second to the private opinions of anyone. The moment I come to this I can be turned by the will of others' infallibility. When I cannot take this position I can gracefully cast off responsibilities. I shall have no more controversies with my dear wife. She may call it a 'mouse or a bat' and have her own way. If she doesn't like my position in reference to Edson or other matters, will she please [keep] her opinion to herself and let me enjoy mine? Your remarks called me out. And now that you cannot endure my speaking as plainly as you do, I have done. ... I think we can better labor apart than together until you can lay down your continual efforts to hold me in condemnation. When you have a message from the Lord for me, I hope I shall be where I shall tremble at His word. But aside from that, you must let me be an equal, or we had better work alone. Don't be anxious about my dwelling on disagreeables any more. I have them in my heart. But while on the stage of action I shall use the good old head God gave me until He reveals that I am wrong. Your head won't fit my shoulders. Keep it where it belongs, and I will try to honor God in using my own. I shall be glad to hear from you, but don't waste your precious time and strength lecturing me on matters of mere opinions."<sup>157</sup>

Several letters were sent from Ellen to James during that same period, almost daily. In another letter to James, probably after she had written to Lucinda, Ellen rephrased her thoughts:

It grieves me that I have said or written anything to grieve you. Forgive me and I will be cautious not to start any subject to annoy and distress you. We are living in a most solemn time and we cannot afford to have in our old age differences to separate our feelings. I may not view all things as you do, but I do not think it would be my place or duty to try to make you see as I see and feel as I feel. Wherein I have done this, I am sorry. ... I wish that self should be hid in Jesus. I wish self to be crucified. I do not claim infallibility, or even perfection of Christian character. I am not free from mistakes and errors in my life. Had I followed my Saviour more closely, I should not have to mourn so much my unlikeness to His dear image. ... No more shall a line be

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<sup>157</sup> Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 66) May 16, 1876.

traced by me or expression made in my letters to distress you. Again, I say forgive me, every word or act that has grieved you. I have earnestly prayed for light in reference to going east and I have now decided my work is here, to write and do those things [that] the Spirit of God shall dictate.<sup>158</sup>

The next day, Ellen wrote to Lucinda regretting bringing out and burdening Lucinda with particular points of her marriage relationship. She pleaded with Lucinda to burn the letters, but Lucinda did not obey. Thus, these four letters expose a tense moment in the James-Allen marital relationship that would never be known had Lucinda followed Ellen's order.

I am sorry I wrote you the letters I have. Whatever may have been my feelings, I need not have troubled you with them. Burn all my letters, and I will relate no matters that perplex me to you. ... I will not be guilty of uttering a word again, whatever may be the circumstances. Silence in all things of a disagreeable or perplexing character has ever been a blessing to me. When I have departed from this, I have regretted it so much. You knew when you left that there was no one I could speak with, however distressed I might be; but this is no excuse. I have written to James a letter of confession. ... I received last night a letter from James expressing a very [different] tone of feelings. But I dare not cross the plains. It is better for us both to be separated. I have not lost my love for my husband, but I cannot explain things. ... I have no confidence that it was your duty to go east when you did. Had you remained, I might have accomplished much more. But I understand all the circumstances, and have not a word of censure to lay on you or my husband or anyone.<sup>159</sup>

While Lucinda disobeyed her friend's request and kept those letters from Ellen, the original letters James and Ellen wrote to each other during that time were lost. The only extant correspondence from James that survived and seem to point to some tension during that period were some letters to Willie in May of 1876. James did not confide in Willie as Ellen did in Lucinda, but seemed to be unhappy with certain situations.

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<sup>158</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 27) May 16, 1876.

<sup>159</sup> Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 67) May 17, 1876.



James seemed to be in a difficult mood and described the people working for the Adventist cause in California with harsh words. He advised Willie to go to Europe as a mission field instead of “close up with that unworthy people of the Pacific,” and wrote that Ellen should not spend her “strength over unthankful souls in California” and save her “power for more worthy subjects.”<sup>160</sup> Being very busy in Battle Creek, on top of the unpleasant situation with the workers on the West Coast and the distance from Ellen, James showed an unforgiving attitude that affected his health.

James also exerted excessive control concerning Ellen’s writings. He was her main proofreader, but he was very busy and asked Willie to give the material to May for the first reading; nevertheless, he told them not to print anything without his consent or before he could read “every line.”<sup>161</sup> During those days, he also constantly repeated that he was doing good.<sup>162</sup> The fact that James repeated this could be an indication that his spirits and health were not good, but he was trying to prove they were, especially if the family and particularly Ellen decided to stay away from Michigan. In the end, he showed satisfaction at the news that Ellen would attend camp meetings in Kansas and meet with him: “I am very glad that mother and May are coming.”<sup>163</sup> Soon they were together working at the Kansas camp meeting and then attended several others.

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<sup>160</sup> James White to Ellen G. White, April 18, 1876.

<sup>161</sup> James White to William C. White, May 16, 1876; cf. James White to William C. White, May 7, 1876.

<sup>162</sup> James White to Ellen G. White, April 18, 1876; James White to Ellen G. White, April 21, 1876; James White to William C. White, May 16, 1876; James White to William C. White, May 19, 1876.

<sup>163</sup> James White to William C. White and Mary K. White, May 21, 1876.

## James's Relational Difficulties with Others and the Consequences for the Work of Ellen G. White

The two last years of James's life were not the easiest ones. His past strokes still affected him, especially emotionally. James grew suspicious of others and strongly criticized those who disagreed with him. To make things more difficult, he began to develop the idea that when Ellen rebuked him or did not defend his attitude, others had influenced her. This had a negative impact not only on Ellen's life but on her ministry.

Although James had been released from some leadership functions in the church and he "was theoretically in agreement with the idea that he should step aside and let others carry the burden of leadership in the church, it was not easy for him to stand back and have no say in what should be done and how." James "was distressed when he saw moves made in administrative lines that he felt could result in failure or would injure the cause."<sup>164</sup> In 1880, he was not reelected president of the GC, but continued to be president of the Publishing Association and editor in chief of the *Review and Herald*.<sup>165</sup> When the new leaders did not consult with him, he was a little frustrated. Just a month after the GC Session, Ellen advised their son William to write to his father showing "some confidence in him."<sup>166</sup>

The main problem of these last years (1879–1881) was a sense of suspicion and distrust of some leaders and accusations from both sides that others influenced Ellen's

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<sup>164</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:154.

<sup>165</sup> James White and U. Smith, "General Conference of S. D. Adventists. Nineteenth Annual Session, Oct. 6, 1880," *RH*, October 14, 1880, 252; James White and U. Smith, "S. D. A. Publishing Association," *RH*, October 14, 1880, 252.

<sup>166</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 45b) November 3, 1880; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:154.

rebukes and messages.<sup>167</sup> Just a few months after James died, Ellen exposed an attitude that some had held toward her ministry: “Many excused their disregard of the testimonies by saying: ‘Sister White is influenced by her husband; the testimonies are molded by his spirit and judgment.’”<sup>168</sup>

During his last years, James felt that the brethren in California was raising questions about his motives and were against him. Ellen tried to change his mind. He suspected Elder Waggoner of trying “to get the sympathies of the people against” him, and thought Edson, his son, “for the sake of building up himself,” had “been willing to unsettle the confidence of the brethren in” James White. Ellen responded, “In regard to Elder Waggoner, you do him injustice ... He has exerted no influence against you. ... Edson has done nothing of the kind you mention ... but you misjudge him also.” She appealed to her husband, “I hope the Lord will help you to put these suspicions out of your heart. ... Let us not be so ready to vindicate our own course. Talk of Jesus, exalt Him, and let self sink into nothingness.” She pleaded with James not to censure his brethren “in thought, by pen, or by word,” because “feelings must not be a ruling power” and they should “not be found accusers of our brethren, for this is the work Satan is engaged in.”<sup>169</sup> James also had problems with his son William, the one in whom he had freedom to confide things. According to James, William “may be in as much danger of

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<sup>167</sup> Moon and Kaiser, “For Jesus and Scripture,” 53–54.

<sup>168</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 5:63–64. This was written from Healdsburg, California, June 20, 1882, to “Dear Brethren and Sisters in Battle Creek”; cf. William C. White, “On the Spirit of Prophecy,” *GCB*, June 2, 1913, 233.

<sup>169</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 5) March 18, 1880; cf. Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 10) March 12, 1880, (Lt 11) March 15, 1880, (Lt 13) March 17, 1880, and (Lt 30) May 26, 1880; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:138–139.

taking extreme views of such subjects, as his father,”<sup>170</sup> and some of William’s attitudes hurt James “terribly.”<sup>171</sup>

Ellen also disapproved of James (and other leaders) saying or writing things that would lessen the confidence in church leaders. She pointed out that James “by his zealous efforts to correct the error,” would be “in danger of producing a greater one.” It would not “please God” nor be good for the cause to print matters “that would lessen the confidence of the people in our leading men.”<sup>172</sup> Arthur White notes, “James White accepted the reproof, but it was one of the most difficult experiences he was called to cope with, for he felt he was doing the right thing.”<sup>173</sup>

This “lack of agreement” between the brethren, and the accusations that Ellen was being influenced by others distressed her, especially when her husband was involved in the disagreements and suspicion about the origin of her comments. “This lack of harmony is killing me,”<sup>174</sup> wrote Ellen. “Father has been in such a state of mind I feared he would lose his reason,” she also wrote, “but he is concluding to lay off the burdens of office matters and go to writing. I hope he will do so, for he will surely come out a perfect

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<sup>170</sup> James White to Ellen G. White, April 18, 1880.

<sup>171</sup> James White to William C. White, May 4, 1880; cf. James White to William C. White, June 10, 1877; James White to William C. White and Mary K. White, February 27, 1879; James White to William C. White, May 15, 1879; James White to Ellen G. White, March 31, 1880.

<sup>172</sup> Ellen G. White, “Publishing Work”, Ms 1, June 6, 1879. Some examples of these disagreements were, “low prices upon publications” (Ellen G. White, “Publishing Work”, Ms 1, June 6, 1879; cf. Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, [Lt 7] February 16, 1879), and the interpretation of Daniel 11 about the “king of the north” (see Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:96–97; idem, “Differences in Doctrinal Views Held by Uriah Smith and James White [King of the North]” [Ellen G. White Estate, 1966]; André Scalfani, “King of the North,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*).

<sup>173</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:97.

<sup>174</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 5a) June 14, 1881; cf. Ellen G. White to G. I. Butler and S. N. Haskell, (Lt 8) June 20, 1881; Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, (Lt 2) June 28, 1881.

wreck unless he does change.” The situation was almost impossible to deal with, and she penned, “I am at times in such perplexity and distress of mind I covet retirement or death, but then I gather courage again.”<sup>175</sup>

Ellen condemned several of James’s attitudes. She was distressed when he thought others have been influencing her against him, “If I reprov’d my husband, he would feel I was severe and others had prejudic’d me against him.”<sup>176</sup> James asserted in a letter to a friend, “I think wife has been more severe than the Lord really required her to be in some cases,” and he added, “Elder Butler and Haskell have had an influence over her that I hope to see broken. It has nearly ruin’d her.”<sup>177</sup>

Ellen pointed out that James “was not patient, kind, and forbearing,” but “severity and too much dictation became interwoven with his character.”<sup>178</sup> Moreover, he had “not preserv’d caution” and had “not felt right nor view’d his brethren in altogether the right light,” he “exaggerat’d” things, and he seem’d to lean toward the idea that his judgment, voice, and opinion should be accepted. James had, with his attitudes, “marred the work of God from time to time.”<sup>179</sup> Thus, James had “a work to do to preserve the control of his own spirit under provocation, . . . a duty to treat his ministering brethren, with deference and respect, . . . guardin’ sacredly their influence and their reputation before the people.”

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<sup>175</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 1a) January 6, 1881.

<sup>176</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 8a) July 27, 1881.

<sup>177</sup> James White to Dudley M. Canright, May 24, 1881.

<sup>178</sup> Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, (Lt 2) November 8, 1880; cf. Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, George I. Butler, and B. Whitney, (Lt 2a) November 8, 1880; Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, (Lt 3) November 17, 1880; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:155.

<sup>179</sup> Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, (Lt 2) November 8, 1880.

He also should cover “their defects,” if he thought they exist, “as he would have them bear with and cover his defects.”<sup>180</sup>

Ellen also strongly rebuked those who accused her husband. They were in danger, based on James’s attitudes of exaggerating and being too demanding, “of shutting away from [themselves] his advice and counsel.” James could see mistakes that others did not see.<sup>181</sup> Others were making “mistakes somewhat after the order” James had made, even to “a tenfold degree.”<sup>182</sup>

The very men who would condemn him for sharpness in words and for dictating and being overbearing are tenfold more so, when they dare to be, than he has ever been. They have crowded him out of positions, alleging this as their reason, when they do far worse than he, and the matter is not helped a particle. I know what I am writing about. They have less self-control than he has had. This is expressly developed in the spirit and manners of McCoy and Dr. Kellogg. I am sorry to see that Elders Butler and Haskell are as much influenced by Dr. Kellogg’s words and statements as they are.<sup>183</sup>

They also were very suspicious of James. “Should my husband now labor ever so faithfully,” pointed out Ellen, “all he would do would be criticized, and suspicions that had no foundation would be created, [even] if he did his best.”<sup>184</sup> While “the sheep are starving for the Bread of Life” and “must be fed,” the leaders should make “vital piety

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<sup>180</sup> Ellen G. White to George I. Butler and S. N. Haskell, (Lt 8) June 20, 1881. In one letter Ellen cautioned James, “Dear Husband: Yesterday I received your two letters, one penned by Sister Fero, and one by Brother Henry. I would suggest that these letters, where you give expression so freely to your feelings in regard to others, be written by your own hand or by the pen of Henry. Do not take strangers into close confidence. You may greatly injure them, and it will, in the end, all come back upon yourself” (Ellen G. White to James White, [Lt 19] April 6, 1880).

<sup>181</sup> Ellen G. White to George I. Butler and S. N. Haskell, (Lt 8) June 20, 1881.

<sup>182</sup> Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, (Lt 1) April 22, 1881; Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 8a) July 27, 1881.

<sup>183</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 8a) July 27, 1881.

<sup>184</sup> Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, (Lt 1) April 22, 1881.

and practical godliness ... a specialty.”<sup>185</sup> She even threatened that “unless there could be union, I should withdraw myself from the field of labor.”<sup>186</sup>

Not defending James’s attitudes, but understanding his health and mental condition, considering his situation in this work of suspicion, distrust, and accusation, Ellen wrote,

Some things my husband has said and the course he has pursued has not been all as it should be. ... God does not, neither has He, justified my husband in any thought, word, or action contrary to the plain Christian course marked out in His Word. But God has been very merciful, for his shattered nerves, and his diseased head has led to the extremes he has shown in his life. Some cannot understand his condition; but the Lord knows and bears with his weakness.<sup>187</sup>

The position of my husband, his age, his affliction, the great work he has done in the cause and work of God have fastened him in the affections of his brethren that many things he might say that savor of sharpness would be overlooked in him, that would not be regarded in the same light if spoken by younger ministers.<sup>188</sup>

One of the most serious problems that troubled Ellen was the weakening of the “testimonies” by the accusation that James had influenced the writings.<sup>189</sup>

I told them I had been in continual fear that my husband’s mistakes and errors would be classed with the testimonies of the Spirit of God and my influence greatly injured. If I bore a plain testimony against existing wrongs they would say, “She is moulded by her husband’s views and feelings.”<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Ellen G. White to George I. Butler and S. N. Haskell, (Lt 8) June 20, 1881.

<sup>186</sup> Ellen G. White to George I. Butler and S. N. Haskell, (Lt 8) June 20, 1881.

<sup>187</sup> Ellen G. White to William Fairfield, (Lt 1a) January 5, 1880. Unfortunately, part of the letter is not extant.

<sup>188</sup> Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, (Lt 2) November 8, 1880.

<sup>189</sup> Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, (Lt 1) April 22, 1881; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 5:63–64; William C. White, “On the Spirit of Prophecy,” *GCB*, June 2, 1913, 233.

<sup>190</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 8a) July 27, 1881.

To those who distrusted the “testimonies” and claimed they had been influenced by others generating prejudice in Ellen, she clearly affirmed, “Not a bit of it.”<sup>191</sup>

#### Last Stroke and Death of James White (August 1881)

In the year 1880, the couple finished and published their co-authored autobiography, *Life Sketches*. James had the conviction that both Ellen and he were called to write books to strengthen the faith of the Adventist community. According to him, they were “better qualified” than others for that, and this work (though he did not despise traveling, preaching, and attending camp meetings) was “greater” than others.<sup>192</sup>

A few months before James’s death, he was enjoying “excellent health” and working “hard” in the backyard of his home.<sup>193</sup> He also experienced “great freedom in speaking and praying.”<sup>194</sup> James was a great promoter of the benefits of camp meetings, but because of health matters, especially Ellen’s exhaustion, they could not attend several of them.<sup>195</sup>

On August 6, 1881, James White passed away.<sup>196</sup> Ellen deeply missed him, “whose large affections” she had leaned, and “been united in labor for thirty-six

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<sup>191</sup> Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, (Lt 1) April 22, 1881.

<sup>192</sup> James White to Ellen G. White, April 18, 1880.

<sup>193</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 4a) May 15, 1881.

<sup>194</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 5a) June 14, 1881.

<sup>195</sup> James White, “The Camp-Meetings,” *RH*, May 24, 1881, 328; cf. Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 4a) May 15, 1881.

<sup>196</sup> [U. Smith], “Fallen at His Post,” *RH*, August 9, 1881, 104–105; “Elder James White,” *New York Times*, August 9, 1881, 5; *In Memoriam: A Sketch of the Last Sickness and Death of Elder James White*.



years.”<sup>197</sup> The year following his death was difficult for Ellen. Besides mourning deeply, she became very weak, suffered much physically, and “came near dying.” She wrote, “I could not endure the thought that I was alone,” without her husband who together with her “had stood side by side in [their] ministerial work.”<sup>198</sup> In their last days together, Ellen emphasized their time spent in prayer. “About two weeks before his death,” she penned, “my husband often asked me to accompany him to the grove, near our house, to engage with him in prayer. These were precious seasons.” On one occasion, James pleaded, “I confess my errors, and ask your forgiveness for any word or act that has caused you sorrow. . . . Everything must be right between us, and between ourselves and God.” Thus they “confessed to each other” their “errors” and supplicated “for the mercy and blessing of God.”<sup>199</sup> James also confessed to others that he had been “combative” and had let his own judgment and sense of right rule him. He asked for the forgiveness of his brethren.<sup>200</sup>

After James’s death, mission remained the main purpose of Ellen’s life. “The best way in which I and my children can honor the memory of him who has fallen,” she wrote, “is to take the work where he left it, and in the strength of Jesus carry it forward to completion.”<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Ellen G. White, “Mrs. White’s Address,” *In Memoriam*, 42; idem, *Testimonies*, 1:111; cf. idem to William C. White, (Lt 17) September 12, 1881.

<sup>198</sup> Ellen G. White to Fannie Capehart, (Lt 82) February 28, 1906.

<sup>199</sup> Ellen G. White, “A Sketch of Experience,” *In Memoriam*, 46–47.

<sup>200</sup> “Verbatim transcript of the shorthand notes, taken by Eld. U. Smith, of a Confession made by Elder James White, at the commencement of his last sickness, in the year 1881,” Uriah Smith/Mark Bovee Collection, C0146, Box 1, Folder 14, CAR-AU.

<sup>201</sup> Ellen G. White, “A Sketch of Experience,” *In Memoriam*, 55; idem, *Testimonies*, 1:111.

## Barriers and Promoting Factors in the Marital Relationship<sup>202</sup>

### Introduction

To understand the marital relationship of the Whites in the context of the nineteenth century, this research adopted the following objectives: (1) to describe and analyze the meanings and practices of the marital relationship of the Whites present in the documents they produced, and (2) to identify consistencies or inconsistencies between their speech and their practice with regard to their marriage.<sup>203</sup>

The examination of the documents allowed the construction of data sets that, according to the research objectives, were organized into three broad, thematic blocks or categories. To address the specific parameters of these thematic blocks, sub-themes were developed for each of them. The general themes are: (1) the dominant meaning of the Whites's marriage, (2) barriers in the relationship, and (3) the promoting factors or potential promoters of the relationship.<sup>204</sup>

### The Dominant Meaning of the Whites' Marriage

In this thematic block two sub-themes are highlighted: (1) dealing with what the marriage of the Whites was not, and (2) the marriage of James and Ellen as a union whose dominant meaning was compliance with the mission.

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<sup>202</sup> Some material from this section has been previously published (Silva and Rodrigues, "The Conjugal Experience of James and Ellen White; idem, "O Casamento de Tiago e Ellen G. White: Significados Construídos pelo Casal," in *Ellen G. White: Seu Impacto Hoje*, eds. Reinaldo Siqueira, Adolfo S. Suárez, and Jean Carlos Zukowski [Engenheiro Coelho, SP: UNASPRESS, 2017], 69–118) and parts of it will be reproduced or paraphrased without quotation marks, but with footnotes in each paragraph.

<sup>203</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 266.

<sup>204</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 266–267.

## The Lack of Romantic Love

The absence of elaborate expressions of love and affection in the private letters between James and Ellen indicates a marriage without the romantic features of their time. The letters from Ellen to James and vice versa conclude with common references of love and care for each other but not elaborated sentences intensifying romance. These affective expressions, “Yours in love,” “Your Ellen,” “In Love,” “In much love I remain, Your Ellen,” “My Dear Ellen,” “Your husband,” do not necessarily point to a relationship *centered* in “romance.”<sup>205</sup>

The letters lack loving content centered on marital intimate affections. The predominant themes in basically all the letters are work, mission, duty, camp meetings, publishers, problems in the brotherhood, and religious themes. Despite expressions of affection and mutual care, especially on the part of Ellen, the private letters lack the central theme of mutual passion, even in a time of great emotional need, during the crisis of James’s disease.<sup>206</sup> This does not mean they did not refer several times to internal family problems and particulars, or there were no expressions of support or conjugal love, but the main point of the correspondences was how they could better serve the Lord and His cause.

Expressions penned in some of the most difficult moments in their relationship demonstrate a great sense of affection between them. In 1874, when Ellen had to travel

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<sup>205</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 268.

<sup>206</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 269.

alone with Willie, despite the relational problems developed at that time, James wrote to Willie,

I was very glad to learn that you were with your mother. Take the tenderest care of your dear mother. And if she wishes to attend the eastern camp meetings, please go with her. Get a tent that will suit you, get everything good in the shape of satchels, blankets, portable chair for Mother, and do not consent to her economical ideas, leading you to pinch along. See that everything like her dresses, shawls, saques, shoes, bonnet etc., are good. . . . I close by again calling your attention to the wants [needs] of your faithful mother, . . . Let your devotion to your mother exceed, if possible, that which you manifested to me. She in every way deserves it.<sup>207</sup>

Ellen also had tender words about her husband and to him. “My husband is very attentive to me, seeking in every way to make my journeyings and labor pleasant and relieve it of weariness,” she wrote in 1875.<sup>208</sup> To James she stated, “I miss you and would love to be with you if this was the will of God.”<sup>209</sup>

Some reasons can be suggested for the formality and lack of romantic affection in this private correspondence between spouses. It could be that this situation was due to the critical stage of James’s disease; however, no warm and intimate expressions typical of married life are found in their writings from other periods of their marriage. There are formal declarations of affection, but they are not romantic in the style of the time.<sup>210</sup>

Another reason could be the chronological phase or absence of marital eroticism. But, in no accessible document does sexual coldness, withdrawal, or denial of sexuality appear as a unit to be analyzed. Marital sexual satisfaction constitutes a complex element and therefore cannot be universally standardized, which makes it impossible to form any

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<sup>207</sup> James White to Willaim C. White, July 5, 1874.

<sup>208</sup> Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 46) June 17, 1875.

<sup>209</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 11) April 20, 1876.

<sup>210</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 269.

serious judgment based on facts about the Whites's intimate life. From Lewin's perspective, this complexity involves individual differentiated demands of those involved, who need to adjust to the dynamics and arrangements of each conjugal group.<sup>211</sup>

Therefore, it cannot be considered scientific practice to issue a judgment or venture any opinion without objective data for analysis—let alone based on an appeal to “imagination,” a word used by Ronald Numbers in arguing that the coolness of Ellen caused or aggravated their marriage conflicts. This lack of solid data is repeated when Numbers implies that the condemnation of sexual “excess”<sup>212</sup> in Ellen's writings relates to an alleged apathy in her marital intimate life.<sup>213</sup> Available data do not point to the age

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<sup>211</sup> Lewin, “The Background of Conflict in Marriage,” 92–93; Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 269.

<sup>212</sup> Often the theme of “excess” or “intemperance of every kind” (Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:280) appears in the writings of Ellen White concerning many aspects of life. For example: eating and drinking (cf. idem, *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene* [Battle Creek, MI: Good Health, 1890], 12; idem, *The Adventist Home*, 121; idem, *The Ministry of Healing* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905], 306); dressing (cf. idem, *Christian Temperance*, 12); working (cf. idem, *Christian Temperance*, 98–99; idem, “The Necessity of Harmony,” in *Spalding and Magan Collection*, 366); studying and amusement (cf. idem, “Our Children—Importance of Early Training,” *HR*, February, 1878, 44); physical exercise (idem, *Messages to Young People* [Nashville, TN: Southern, 1930], 179), and “any excesses” of married lives (idem, *Testimonies*, 2:472), among several similar references.

<sup>213</sup> Ronald L. Numbers, “Sex, Science, and Salvation: The Sexual Advice of Ellen G. White and John Harvey Kellogg,” in *Right Living: An Anglo-American Tradition of Self-Help Medicine and Hygiene*, ed. Charles E. Rosenberg (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 206–226. Numbers states, “One can only imagine how he [James] felt about Ellen's coolness toward sex and her heartfelt condemnations of marital ‘excess.’ . . . She remained generally antipathetic toward sex, though she always stopped short of advocating celibacy” (Numbers, “Sex, Science, and Salvation,” 212; Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008], 217). Numbers's conclusions contradict Ellen's own statements. Though living in a time when restraint was exercised in speaking or writing about sex, she nevertheless wrote about the “privilege of the married life” and that “Jesus did not enforce celibacy upon any class of men” (Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, 121–122; see also Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 105–106). Numbers's analysis, therefore, merely expresses his opinion about the intimate lives of the Whites, but lacks conclusive supporting data. A response was given to the claims of Numbers in 1976, when he published the first edition of his book (see *A Critique of the Book Prophetess of Health*, 15, 71–74).

factor or to sexual problems as elements generating tension between the Whites, so these possibilities should be treated as speculation.<sup>214</sup>

Both James and Ellen seemed generally satisfied with their relationship, and there is no evidence of complaints regarding their sexual life or related to their age. On one occasion Ellen said that when traveling, she preferred sleeping alone to sharing space with other women, except her friend Lucinda, and said to James, “I prize my being all to myself unless graced with your presence. I want to share my bed only with you.”<sup>215</sup> On the other hand, the absence of intimate sexual references in their private letters may indicate that the subject did not occupy the first place in the couple’s agenda. The Whites lived and worked in a time “of great restraint toward speaking publicly or writing of sex and the sexual relationship between husbands and wives.”<sup>216</sup> The fact is that no data are available in the analyzed materials that register complaints from the Whites on that subject during any stage of their married life.<sup>217</sup> It is possible that some of the Whites’s

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<sup>214</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 270.

<sup>215</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 6) April 13, 1876. The couple also had a custom of spending time chatting on some nights before going to sleep (Ellen G. White, “Christ and the Law,” Ms 5, June 19, 1889).

<sup>216</sup> Arthur L. White, “Ellen G. White and Marriage Relations,” *Ministry*, March 1969, 6. Though Ellen was “an ardent advocate of a high standard of purity and holiness,” she condemned “extreme positions in the matter of the relation of husbands and wives.” In her thoughts about the “privilege of the marriage relation” she always condemned both extremes: [1] “sexual excess” or [2] a life of continence in order to reach a higher spiritual level. She pleaded for a moderate course as appropriate for the Christian believer (Arthur L. White, “Ellen G. White and Marriage Relations,” *Ministry*, March 1969, 6–8, 26–27; Arthur L. White, “Ellen G. White and Marriage Relations,” April 1969, 19–21, 23; cf. Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character and Personality* [Silver Springs, MD: Ellen G. White Publications, 1977], 1:218–239; Miroslav M. Kiš, “Sexuality,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*; Leonard Brand and Don S. McMahon, *The Prophet and Her Critics: A Striking New Analysis Refutes the Charges that Ellen G. White “Borrowed” the Health Message* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005], 80–86; Ingemar Lindén, *The Last Trump: An Historico-genetical Study of Some Important Chapters in the Making and Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* [Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1978], 270–278).

<sup>217</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 270–271.

very private letters, which are no longer extant could have included some romantic aspects that might have been perceived as too personal.

### The Mission as the Main Meaning

The mission occupies a central position in the content of the analyzed letters. Even expressions of mutual attention, the desire for James's recovery, or marital conflict are almost always connected to work. They loved each other but they prized the love of God and people to save as the main reason for their lives.<sup>218</sup>

When James suffered the first stroke in 1865, Ellen had to spend quite a deal of time helping him recover, which put the ministerial White team out of the field. During that experience, when "the churches were deprived" of the labors of James and Ellen, Ellen wrote, "To remain longer from the field seemed to me worse than death, and should we move out we could but perish."<sup>219</sup> As mission was the priority of the White couple, the illness of James was an unfortunate obstacle to accomplishing what they loved doing. "My whole heart is in the work of God," Ellen wrote to William, and continued, "Your father's afflicted condition is a great drawback to my happiness. Were it not for this, I should feel that I had no trials."<sup>220</sup> Thus, by the end of 1866, despite cold weather and snowstorms, they returned to the field.<sup>221</sup>

Their whole experience and lives were interwoven with the cause. Ellen affirmed that she "had no separate interest aside from the work" and "had invested everything in

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<sup>218</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 272.

<sup>219</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:103–104, 570–571 (1867).

<sup>220</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 4a) ca. October, 1866.

<sup>221</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:103–104, 570–571 (1867).

this cause, and had considered no sacrifice too great” to do whatever she could to advance it. She “had not allowed affection” of her “loved babes” to hold her back from performing her duty in God’s cause. “We allowed no obstacle,” she declared, “to deter us from duty or separate us from the work.”<sup>222</sup> On a trip by boat up the Mississippi in 1870, James wrote, “Mrs. White is writing. Poor woman! This almost eternal writing for this one and that one, when she should rest and enjoy the beautiful scenery and the pleasant society, seems too bad, but God blesses and sustains, and we must be reconciled.”<sup>223</sup> They often overworked and exceeded their own limits. James “does much writing night after night,” Ellen wrote, “He sits up until midnight writing. I do not think this is a good plan.”<sup>224</sup>

The “greatest embarrassment” for the Whites was their “inability to comply with the many calls in different parts.”<sup>225</sup> “We chose active labor in the cause of God, an itinerant life, with all its hardships, privations, and exposure, to a life of indolence,” affirmed Ellen, and God had fulfilled His promises blessing them “with prosperity and an abundance, . . . a hundredfold in this life.”<sup>226</sup> In 1874, Ellen felt “unreconciled” for “doing nothing of any account,” because she knew she had a testimony for the people during the

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<sup>222</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:581 (1867); cf. 1:87, 98, 101–102.

<sup>223</sup> James White, “Western Tour,” *RH*, July 5, 1870, 21.

<sup>224</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 9) February 7, 1874.

<sup>225</sup> James White, “Eastern Tour,” *RH*, December 12, 1871, 204.

<sup>226</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 3:89–90; Ellen G. White, Ms 3, 1871; cf. Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 6) April 2, 1871; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 27) June 2, 1871.



camp meeting season, but since James was recovering they could not travel.<sup>227</sup> What really brought happiness to their hearts was working to advance the cause of God.

During that same year, 1874, they had an interesting experience that demonstrates their love for the mission; it was really their “ambition.”<sup>228</sup> While they were in California struggling to raise money to implement the work there, James saw that they could not go to the camp meetings in the East. However, “after a most solemn, humble seeking of God,” Ellen and others felt impressed that she should go. James, knowing the importance of the mission, “consent[ed]” and then he “wept aloud and said, ‘Ellen, you must go. I dare not withstand the Lord. You must go. But what shall I do without you?’ We wept freely.” Not losing time, Ellen packed “fearing [that] in his feeble state of health he would relent.” James then affirmed, “If I had not given my consent, I would now say it is inconsistent. I cannot have you go. I cannot be left with these terrible responsibilities.”<sup>229</sup> In another record of this experience, Ellen pointed out that James “was sick and feeble, and very busy,” but in his love for the growing of the work, “weeping like a child” said, “If I had not said you could go, I do not think I could say it now, but I have said it, and I will not take it back.”<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 17) March 20, 1874; cf. Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 16) February 24, 1874; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 19b) April 27, 1874; Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith and Harriet Smith, (Lt 25) May 6, 1874; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:401–423.

<sup>228</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 41) July 11, 1874; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:439.

<sup>229</sup> Ellen G. White, “Fragment—Reminiscences of Early Days in California,” Ms 62, 1895; cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:419–420, 430–431; Ellen G. White, “In the Regions Beyond,” *GCB*, 34<sup>th</sup> Session, April 5, 1901, 83–84.

<sup>230</sup> Ellen G. White, “In the Regions Beyond,” *GCB*, April 5, 1901, 84. This talk was presented April 4, 1901.

Once more, the sense of mission accomplishment that they both had is clear. This compromise was greater than their thought of comfort or doing their own will. It was not easy for James or for Ellen. “I had never traveled alone,” she remembered, “but I took this long journey of eight days alone, and attended the camp meetings in the states alone until Willie White met me at Wisconsin and accompanied me.”<sup>231</sup> The trip was a success, money was raised, and the work prospered in California. Seven years before, they had a quite similar experience, when requests came for them “to attend the convocation meetings in the West.” They both were very weak, but they decided, “We must go.”<sup>232</sup>

In a tribute written by James on Ellen’s fiftieth birthday, he pinpointed that she had publicly labored for thirty-three years, traveled much, spoken to large audiences and written an immense amount: thousands of pages printed in books and “epistolary matter addressed to churches and individuals.” He concluded by congratulating the spirit of his wife in dedicating her life for God’s cause. “Today, November 26, Mrs. White is 50 years old,” James affirmed, “Thousands seem to have been born to no good purpose . . . But the birthday of one whose life has been, and is still, devoted to the cause of God and the good of her fellow creatures, is of some importance.”<sup>233</sup> Mission was a priority and the Whites knew their responsibility. “There is no relief in this war, but we will not get our eyes upon ourselves. Let our pens, our voices bring hope and good cheer to souls that need it so much,”<sup>234</sup> Ellen wrote to James in the summer of 1878.

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<sup>231</sup> Ellen G. White, “Fragment—Reminiscences of Early Days in California,” Ms 62, 1895.

<sup>232</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:600 (1867).

<sup>233</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “Half a Century,” *ST*, December 6, 1877, 372.

<sup>234</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 42a) July 1878.

Until the end of James's life, Ellen also advised him against overworking and not being faithful to the limits of his body. On one occasion, when the Whites and their sons were off for a vacation in the mountains of Colorado, and Ellen had shortened her vacation because of duties in Battle Creek, she advised her family:

Father, our writing can be done in the winter. Lay it aside now. Throw off every burden, and be a carefree boy again. Will and Mary, if they stay in the mountains a few weeks longer, should neither study nor write. They should be made happy for this season, that they may be able to look back to this time as a season of unalloyed pleasure. Willie will soon be plunged into caretaking and burden-bearing again. Let him now be as free as the birds of the air. Mary has never had a childhood any more than Willie has had a boyhood. The few days you now have together, improve. Roam about, camp out, fish, hunt, go to places that you have not seen, rest as you go, and enjoy everything. Then come back to your work fresh and vigorous. ... Forget that there is anything to be written. There is enough already written for our people to digest. Then when new matter does come out, it will come from minds that are fresh because they have been strengthened and invigorated by rest and change. ... I repeat once more, Make the most of it. Do not think that so much writing is necessary. This will keep. Lay all such work aside. I know you will all please God much better by seeking to build up your strength, and laying in a good stock of vitality that you can draw upon in time of need. I should feel sad to see this precious opportunity spoiled by your doing unnecessary things in the line of writing.<sup>235</sup>

As both James and Ellen came to moments of doing less or little because of feebleness, she advised their sons to work temperately, not “overexert” themselves, but “labor prudently,”<sup>236</sup> and retain the “full vigor of your powers to do with efficiency whatever is done.”<sup>237</sup> A few years before, James wrote, “We now regret that we have robbed ourselves and family to help others, and have robbed the cause of God of more efficient service, by wearing out too soon, in the exercise of too rigid industry and

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<sup>235</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, William C. White, Mary K. White, and J. Edson White, (Lt 1) August 24, 1878; cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:93–94.

<sup>236</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 14) March 8, 1878; cf. Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 15) March 10, 1878.

<sup>237</sup> Ellen G. White to children, (Lt 2a) April 6, 1881.

economy.”<sup>238</sup> In one of the last pieces James wrote as GC president, he had another concern: the need for new workers, since the old ones were wearing out.

Time, toil, and care are making their marks upon these devoted pioneers of the cause. And while they are wearing out, we do not see men entering upon the work with the same devotion, self-sacrifice, and power that has characterized the ministry of these men.<sup>239</sup>

While the intrinsic marital projects of the couple were legitimate, James and Ellen were experiencing something more. The symbolic universe of the couple indicates a clear commitment to their religious life, and they did not seem to know how to live otherwise.<sup>240</sup>

The meanings present in the units of analysis of James and Ellen’s letters can be difficult to understand for the romantic generation raised on “liquid love,” as described by Zygmunt Bauman, which is of uncanny frailty, with no permanent or durable bonds, and primarily self-centered.<sup>241</sup> The meanings of the Whites’s love have as their organizing center a mission that they embraced.<sup>242</sup>

This kind of experience is specific to this couple. The Whites’s marriage cannot be assigned the label of bourgeois romantic convenience (based on feeling and passion), Malthusian (based on capitalist reasons), or contemporary (with individualistic morality or just for fun). However, in the couple’s meanings, their marriage was one of mutual

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<sup>238</sup> James White, “Will They Respond?” *RH*, January 11, 1870, 24.

<sup>239</sup> J[ames] W[hite], “Courage in the Lord,” *RH*, July 8, 1880, 41.

<sup>240</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 273.

<sup>241</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003).

<sup>242</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 273.

love, made possible by the divine providence that chose James to stand alongside and support the messenger of God in the transmission of their messages.<sup>243</sup>

So, while they were a typical nineteenth-century couple in many aspects, the singular experience of the Whites and their speeches and practices show a unique worldview built on relations with the Adventist movement and the prophetic gift, in the certainty that their divine mission would take them to the soon return of Jesus. Because of this worldview, they lived their marriage as consecrated to the mission. This is the life experience of the Whites that cannot be analyzed outside of this universe, unique to the couple, their immediate context, and their contemporaries who shared the same ideals.<sup>244</sup>

Consistency between practice and meaning creates individual or group coherence. In this sense, biographical or autobiographical data from the couple's life, when compared with the material analyzed, point to practices being consistent with speeches in their marriage group. Thus, when considering the theological aspect of the question, the experience of James and Ellen, reflected in the feeling of teamwork and their focus on the mission, presented itself as the most coherent and sensible course of married life, particularly in its practical contempt for the romanticism of their time. Who, after all, in good conscience, having direct communication with the Almighty, and receiving from Him the mission to warn the world because the Savior is about to come, could fail to put their mission first, without being inconsistent with their own beliefs?<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 273–274.

<sup>244</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 274.

<sup>245</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 274.

In the above sense, the marriage of the Whites may seem anachronistic, but even in the face of James's crisis, the divergent opinions between him and Ellen, or their renunciation of a home life with their children, the couple never lost sight of the sovereign reason that united them. At no time or place did their marriage become incoherent or inconsistent with its central and unique reference of life. Their sense of teamwork worked as a strengthening element of the marital bond.<sup>246</sup>

No indicator in the lives of the Whites allows the researcher, from the data present in the documents, to consider their marriage empty or meaningless. Rather, the data point to an intense union with a mission, whose greatest risk was their extreme involvement with each other and their mission leading to one or both abandoning or destroying the group by an excess of activity leading to "oversatiation."<sup>247</sup> However, also in this regard, James and Ellen's efforts were well defined and objective: they were always pondering how to harmonize marriage and mission.<sup>248</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that the love of James and Ellen did not fit the concept of romantic love of the nineteenth century, although the data indicate affection, attention, mutual care, productive sexuality, and lifelong marital fidelity. Their relationship contained solid couple elements and was independent of the traditional concept of romantic love, which is a transient social construction. As shown in the data, it was focused on the mission as its dominant meaning, but this was not exclusive of other meanings. In addition, they had a sense of teamwork with clear, concrete, and achievable

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<sup>246</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 274–275.

<sup>247</sup> Lewin, "The Background of Conflict in Marriage," 92.

<sup>248</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 275.

goals, working as an element that strengthened and gave meaning to the union—an element in the lives of successful couples, as pointed out by Lewin.<sup>249</sup>

On the other hand, work, when interwoven with marriage, can conspire against the marriage, since it can take priority over the needs of a member or work against the dynamics of the marriage group. This issue will be addressed in the next section, which deals with barriers present in the marriage of Ellen and James.

### Barriers in the Marital Relationship of the Whites

#### Human Imperfections

Both James and Ellen recognized their limitations and frailty. As Diana Garland points out, “Inevitably, family members intentionally or unintentionally cause harm to one another, break trust and disappoint.”<sup>250</sup> James and Ellen never claimed infallibility or perfection. Thus, they were willing to humble themselves and ask forgiveness from each other, though as human beings it was not the easiest thing for them to do. As rightly stated by Garland, “the belief that a good marriage can be achieved by hard work ignores the imperfection of persons, who can only rely on God’s grace to lift them out of their unsuccessful attempts to perfect themselves and their relationships.” It is important that the couple do their best, but “the maintenance of the marriage covenant cannot be guaranteed by their own hard work,” because “People who are flawed cannot form a perfect relationship. A strong and satisfying relationship is not something persons can

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<sup>249</sup> Lewin, “The Background of Conflict in Marriage,” 92.

<sup>250</sup> Garland, *Family Ministry*, 357.

assure, but it is the fruit that comes in the process of relating to one another by the grace of God.”<sup>251</sup>

In 1876, when the couple was facing one of their most turbulent moments, Ellen penned to James, “It grieves me that I have said or written anything to grieve you. Forgive me and I will be cautious not to start any subject to annoy and distress you.” In the same letter she continued, “I do not claim infallibility, or even perfection of Christian character. I am not free from mistakes and errors in my life. Had I followed my Saviour more closely, I should not have to mourn so much my unlikeness to His dear image.”<sup>252</sup> “Forgive me for any words of impatience that have escaped my lips, every seeming act of wrong in your sight,” she wrote in 1880.<sup>253</sup> She recognized that sometimes she did less than she should have done. “Your father,” she wrote to her son, “has had many cares and burdens and I have failed sometimes to help him in the best way I could.”<sup>254</sup>

James also had to recognize his wrongs and asked for forgiveness many times. His son William defined James as a man who recognized his own shortcomings and limitations: “When reproved or instructed, through the testimonies to the church, for his error, he was quick to respond to counsel or reproof, and hearty in his confession of

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<sup>251</sup> Garland, *Family Ministry*, 172.

<sup>252</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 27) May 16, 1876; cf. Knight, *Walking with Ellen White*, 42–43.

<sup>253</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 5) March 18, 1880; cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:138–139.

<sup>254</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 14) October 26, 1871.



error.”<sup>255</sup> Therefore, both James and Ellen had their faults that played a role in their less than perfect relationship.

### James’s Personality and His Disease

James’s personality and his disease appear as barriers in the marital relationship. At first glance, James’s problem could be regarded as arising directly and exclusively from post-stroke consequences,<sup>256</sup> suggesting an exclusively organic-medical origin for his aggressive, suspicious, and controlling behavior during the crises.<sup>257</sup> However, this explanation based on a single physical factor is contradicted by data from James’s and Ellen’s speeches and the descriptions of his grandson Arthur White. James had been building the framework for this behavior for some time, since his first contact with warning messages about how his manner would reflect on his health.<sup>258</sup> He wrote:

From the time of my first acquaintance with the one whom God has chosen to speak through [,] to His erring people up to the time of the last vision, I have been cautioned from time to time of my danger of speaking, while under the pressure of a sense of the wrongs of others, in an unguarded manner, and using words that would not have the best effect on those I reprov'd. ... I have been warned to trust in God, and let Him fight my battles and vindicate my cause, and not suffer my mind to dwell upon the course of those who had injured me. But in my “peculiar trials” I have lost sight of such blessed admonitions, and have dwelt upon the wrongs of others greatly to my injury. My courage, faith, and health have suffered on the account.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> William C. White, “On the Spirit of Prophecy,” *GCB*, June 2, 1913, 233; cf. James White, *A Solemn Appeal to the Ministry*.

<sup>256</sup> Ellen G. White, *Daughters of God*, 260.

<sup>257</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 275–276.

<sup>258</sup> Knight, *Walking with Ellen White*, 72.

<sup>259</sup> James White, *A Solemn Appeal to the Ministry*, 6, 8; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:426–427; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 544.

Thus, the disease had a circular or cyclical origin: first, his behavior led to his illness, and then the stroke caused further behavior changes, which in turn sickened him further. In addition, to Ellen, the cause of James's illness did not "exist in reality," being a production of James's mind that affected his health, and not the opposite.<sup>260</sup> Ellen wrote, "it is not so much that I am afflicted with your distrust and suspicions of me that troubles me, but that you let it afflict you. It wears upon your health, and I am unable to remove the cause because it does not exist in reality."<sup>261</sup> Ellen also attributed a spiritual meaning to the origin of James's problem:<sup>262</sup>

I can but feel that the enemy is making you miserable by keeping your mind upon matters that are of no profit, but only an injury. . . . Satan sees your weakness in this respect, and he will make every effort to attack you just where he has succeeded so often.<sup>263</sup>

She pointed out that James's health depended on whether he could keep control over letting "the wrongs or supposed wrongs of others depress and dishearten" him. This situation was not merely caused by organic and physiological factors, but by the fragility of James in exercising the power of his will and resisting the "temptations of the devil," as follows:<sup>264</sup>

I want you to be happy. Your health and life depend upon your being happy and cheerful. No matter what course others pursue, this need not have such all-controlling power over your mind. Just as long as you will let the wrongs or supposed wrongs of others depress and dishearten you, you will have enough of this business to attend to.

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<sup>260</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 276.

<sup>261</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 38) July 2, 1874; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:433–434.

<sup>262</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 276.

<sup>263</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 40) July 8, 1874; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:435–436.

<sup>264</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 276.

... Light, precious light, ... He [God] will let beam upon you to be imparted to others, if you will only resist the temptations of the devil to write and talk out your feelings of trial, your temptations, and your discouragements.<sup>265</sup>

Although the disease revealed a sharper picture of James's behavior, the documents show several contributing factors in addition to illness: overwork,<sup>266</sup> his tendency to dwell on the mistakes of others,<sup>267</sup> and his lack of will to resist evil thoughts and temptations of the devil.<sup>268</sup>

Documents and authors used in this research describe James as exceeding at work by his zeal, taking on different roles, writing, establishing institutions, and traveling extensively. He himself admitted:

Had I heeded these warnings as I should, I would have been able to stand against the temptations to overwork pressed upon me by my brethren, and a love to labor while seeing so much to do. And now, as the consequence, just as the field is opening as never before, and there is so much very important work to be done, I have found

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<sup>265</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 40) July 8, 1874; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:435–436.

<sup>266</sup> Before the 1870s, James had sometimes already recognized that his frail health prevented him to continue working actively in the activities he accumulated as a church leader (e.g., in 1855, see Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 1:334; William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: XXX,” 6–7). During that time (1855), the “anxiety of mind,” added to James’s burdens and labors in the Office, traveling responsibilities, the death of his dearly siblings (Nathaniel and Anna), and “the lack of sympathy from those who should have shared his labors,” “were too much for his strength” (Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:194–195; idem, *Testimonies*, 1:97–98; Ellen G. White to Reuben and Belinda Loveland, [Lt 2a] January 24, 1856). On several occasions Ellen emphasized the fact that James did “the work of three men,” and she “never saw a man work so energetically” and “so constantly” as James, to the point that she suggested that “God does give him more than mortal energy” (Ellen G. White to William C. White, [Lt 39] August 17, 1876; cf. Ellen G. White to Cousin Reed, [Lt 20], 1870; Ellen G. White, “Lessons from the Fifty-Eighth [Chapter] of Isaiah, Ms 8, 1904; idem, “Remember the Sabbath Day, to Keep it Holy,” Ms 146, 1906; Ellen G. White to S. T. Belden, [Lt 396] December 26, 1906).

<sup>267</sup> James White to Abram A. Dodge, July 31, 1853; Ellen G. White, “Extracts of Visions,” Ms 5, 1853; cf. Ellen G. White to Abram A. and Caroline Dodge, (Lt 6) 1853; Cf. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:194–195; James White, “Health Reform—No. 4,” *HR*, February 1871, 152–153.

<sup>268</sup> Cf. Ellen G. White, “Testimony Regarding James and Ellen White,” Ms 1, June 6, 1863; William C. White, “Sketches and Memories,” *RH*, November 12, 1936, 3. Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 277.

myself for a few weeks past unable to do anything.<sup>269</sup>

James worked to excess, to the point of being unable to resist “temptations to overwork.” He was always looking for what remained to be done, indicating the association of two frames favorable to stress: overwork and anxiety over what to do.<sup>270</sup>

Another aspect of James’s personality was that during recovery, he sometimes became more rigid in accepting or following instructions. In 1878, for example, in a challenging period as James was recovering from another stroke and very feeble, Ellen vented to her children,

I should have not consented to cross the plains this last time had it not been for Father’s health and to leave you children free to pursue your studies. I hope that it will not prove a failure. Certainly it is no little sacrifice for me to be in the position I am with the care of your invalid father with no child to share it with me. In many things he seems as he used to; in many things he needs guarding tenderly and firmly. He gets habits that will prove a great hindrance to his recovery. It is difficult to break up these in such a manner as to leave the impression we do not want to rule, but act as an advisor, a counselor.<sup>271</sup>

Even though James was doing some work, such as preaching, his depressing feelings affected him in such a way that he had neither physical nor mental strength to resist those feelings. This burdened Ellen, because she had to dedicate almost all her time to caring for him, with much to do in the field, and especially when she knew James could do better. “My soul is weighed down with responsibility, and my hands are tied,” wrote Ellen, and continued,

I dare not go and leave Father without Lucinda or Mary Clough or anyone with him. I dare not take him with me, for he has his habits of eating and sleeping that

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<sup>269</sup> James White, *A Solemn Appeal to the Ministry*, 8–9; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:428. Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 277–278.

<sup>270</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 278.

<sup>271</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 7) February 10, 1878.

would not impress the people correctly. It is difficult to make him feel that it is not faith to pet invalidism.<sup>272</sup>

Therefore, in addition to James's overworking, anxiety about what to do and what remained to be done, and letting the wrongs or supposed wrongs of others depress and dishearten him, his personality was affected in a depressive way, making it harder for him to accept a better way to accelerate his recovery.

### Rupture, Unsatisfied Need, and Loss of Meaning

This excess involvement at work is supported by some of James's statements, the reports of his biographers, and statements from Ellen. The constant thought of *much remains to be done* must have become a greater burden even on the global scale of the challenge before him and the few who accompanied him to proclaim the threefold message deposited in the hands of the newborn church (Rev 14:6–12). So James, in that situation, suddenly found himself unable to carry out the mission that occupied the center of his personal and marital life. He suddenly suffered what Tania Zittoun calls "rupture" in his life story, and this required a response or adjustment of the body to the new situation.<sup>273</sup>

The process of adjustment to a new situation is called a "transition." The meanings present in the transition of James, facing the loss of his place in church business and as an inseparable partner to Ellen, were insecurity; complaints; mistrust, jealousy, and later guilt; regret for his conduct; and finally confessing his mistake—a

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<sup>272</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 7) February 10, 1878.

<sup>273</sup> Tania Zittoun, "Dynamics of Life-course Transitions: A Methodological Reflection," in *Dynamic Process Methodology in the Social and Developmental Sciences*, eds. Jaan Valsiner et. al. eds. (New York, NY: Springer, 2009), 405–429. Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 278.

process that unfolded until his death.<sup>274</sup> In this process, he struggled to return to the previous path, only to fail successively. James's trials before the rupture affected primarily the peripheral areas of his personal and marital life. But, as someone addicted to work, when he was jettisoned from the process, his frame reversed to an "unsatisfied need" or "state of hunger" condition.<sup>275</sup>

In the case of James, among the various reactions to unmet needs expected in the conjugal group and in a group strongly interwoven with work, the "hunger" resulting from his separation from Ellen and work could have led to apathy, aggression, and the abandonment of the marital group or an attempt to destroy it.<sup>276</sup> The data indicate that James's period of dealing with his rupture, during his transition, was quite painful, marked by insecurity, complaints, desire for domination over Ellen, and jealousy that someone else was influencing her ministry in the way he understood belonged to him.<sup>277</sup>

Lewin points to "the state of hunger" as a tension-generating element that, if not relieved by the individual adapting to the new conditions in the group, can lead to dissolution. In this sense, independent of James's illness, his tension and aggression, or even apathy, could have been generated by another barrier between him and his psychological goal. It would be enough that any barrier would last long enough to

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<sup>274</sup> Cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:442–445; *In Memoriam*, 44–50.

<sup>275</sup> Lewin, "The Background of Conflict in Marriage," 89, 91–92. Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 278.

<sup>276</sup> Lewin, "The Background of Conflict in Marriage," 89, 91.

<sup>277</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 278–279.

generate hunger and anxiety and be interpreted as impossible to remove or as lasting indefinitely, which would be unbearable for him.<sup>278</sup>

Thus, the unusual behavior of James can be described as a coherent result of the sudden and disabling rupture and the inability to keep up with his work. Another aspect related to James's suffering is the emptiness produced because of the significance that this work had for him, as a global movement leader who was preparing the world for Jesus's return. Thus, we can see the "state of hunger" and loss of meaning in life, since the mission was the dominant meaning in their relationship and gave meaning to their existence. This emptying of meaning and "state of hunger" can help clarify the oscillation between the apathy, frustration, and aggression that served as barriers in the marital relationship.<sup>279</sup>

#### Losses and Coherence/Consistency

James's mistrust towards others may also have been related to the loss of his exclusive position. Although he had little academic training, James's work evidences clarity and exceptional competence. This performance was a result of above average intelligence and skill at written and oral communication, described by Ellen in these words: "God has given you a good intellect—I might say a giant intellect." He had a special talent in writing and speech, described by Ellen as unique: "No one can speak or

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<sup>278</sup> Lewin, "The Background of Conflict in Marriage," 89, 91. Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 279.

<sup>279</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 279.

write words that will sway so powerful an influence as yourself, and gladness, hope, and courage are put into all hearts.”<sup>280</sup>

James also believed that he had a unique mission as an aid in the transmission of the prophecies: “Mine has been a peculiar work. It was my duty to stand by the side of Mrs. White in her work of delivering the reproofs of the Lord.”<sup>281</sup> He called this mission his “peculiar work” and said it was his “duty,” together with Ellen, to deliver “the reproofs of the Lord.” These meanings show that James understood his role with Ellen to be almost irreplaceable. For him, his work was unique and sacred, since it was related to the transmission of revelations given to Ellen.<sup>282</sup>

Accordingly, the meanings appear to be too important and, at the same time, not transferrable. If James’s work were taken away from him, whatever the reason, it would be too much for him, and the other possible candidates to accompany Ellen or counsel her would be objects of suspicion and jealousy, described by Lewin as the feeling that something that is ours is being stolen. As shown in the documents analyzed, the jealous frame of mind can involve possessiveness of the beloved object, disqualification of competitors, and distrust or blackmail, for example. As a result, there may be patrolling and control of the object that is about to be lost.<sup>283</sup> In the analyzed documents, James’s

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<sup>280</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 38) July 2, 1874; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:433. Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 279.

<sup>281</sup> James White, *A Solemn Appeal to the Ministry*, 6; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:427.

<sup>282</sup> See for example this statement that James wrote to his son, “I hope you will not encourage Mother to print her books without me. If she chooses to stay and write, very good. Then when May has all completed it will be but a small job for me to plan and arrange. Willie, you know I should hear every line read first” (James White to William C. White, May 16, 1876). Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 279–280.

<sup>283</sup> Lewin, “The Background of Conflict in Marriage,” 99–100.



jealousy is related to work and his position next to the messenger of the Lord, as it was his duty to advise her. The suspicion that others were influencing Ellen appears in his speech, and he hoped that this suspected influence would be removed: “Elders Butler and Haskell have had an influence over her that I hope to see broken. It has nearly ruined her.”<sup>284</sup> However, Ellen, who always insisted that she was independent of external influences in her prophetic ministry, pointed out the lack of justification for this jealousy: “But if you are coming to discourage and weaken yourself and me by censure and suspicion and jealousy, I fear we should do great injury to the cause of God.”<sup>285</sup>

Therefore, among other reasons, as noted above, James’s strong temper can be understood as resulting from the limitations that the psychological and health crisis imposed with regard to the fulfillment of his “duty,”<sup>286</sup> as well as his departure from his intense work agenda as a prominent church leader. The desired outcome of the crisis, as expressed in the letters, always related to returning to work and Ellen’s company, not in the sense of restoring their marriage (which had not been broken or denied), but in the sense of fulfilling the duty to do good for the church’s mission.<sup>287</sup>

On the other hand, the data indicate that James, despite the tensions and conflicts, insecurities and suspicions, did not give up on his mission. Although aged and broken, he

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<sup>284</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:445. In another occasion (1873), James and George Butler disagreed on leadership and church administration, and Ellen pointed out that Butler was acting wrongly (Ellen G. White, “Diary,” Ms 7, May 8, 1873).

<sup>285</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 40a) July 10, 1874; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:438. Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 280.

<sup>286</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:427.

<sup>287</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 280.

found ways to reflect on his mistakes, acknowledge them, and seek divine acceptance.<sup>288</sup> He did not reject his faith, repudiate the Adventist cause, or deny his allegiance to Ellen (although they diverged in matters of personal opinion), but reaffirmed his belief and submission to the prophetic gift, as stated:<sup>289</sup>

I have never doubted the visions of Mrs. W[hite]. If a trial or temptation had for a moment come over my mind, as I did not, and could not, understand all, I at once fell back upon the vast amount of clear evidence in their favor, and there rested until all was made clear. ... I have clearly seen the position and importance of the Testimonies in the work of the third message, and have prized them highly, and have designed ever to conform to their teachings. But I have not given them that reflection and attention I should. I have not read them over and over in order to keep their teachings fresh in my mind, as I should.<sup>290</sup>

And now, as the consequence, just as the field is opening as never before, and there is so much very important work to be done, I have found myself for a few weeks past unable to do anything. And my cry has been, from December 20–26 [1872], and still is, that God will raise me up once more and put His word within me, that I may have a part in the closing triumphs of the last message.<sup>291</sup>

I have been able to make the full surrender of all to God, and as I have confessed my sins to God and those with me, and united with them in prayer for pardon, and restoration to peace of mind, faith, hope, and physical strength and health, the Spirit of God has come upon us in a wonderful degree. ... I now feel sure that God has forgiven my sins, so far as I have seen them, and confessed them in the spirit of true repentance. My sins do not longer separate me from God. And as I have made a determined effort to draw nigh to God, He has come very nigh to me. That terrible weight of discouragement and gloom that has been upon me much of the time for the past two years is gone from me, and hope, courage, peace, and joy have taken its place.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:427–429, 445.

<sup>289</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 280–281.

<sup>290</sup> James White, *A Solemn Appeal to the Ministry*, 5; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:426; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 544.

<sup>291</sup> James White, *A Solemn Appeal to the Ministry*, 8–9; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:428.

<sup>292</sup> James White, *A Solemn Appeal to the Ministry*, 11; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:429.

James thus reaffirmed his belief, maintained his marital fidelity, and declared that he was “never” suspicious of the prophetic gift of Ellen. Therefore, despite James’s painful transition through disease and loss, mistakes and regret, the central aspects of his life (values, beliefs, and hopes), remained consistent with his speech until his last days. In this sense, we find a human James, who, despite his weaknesses, did not allow them to change the dominant meanings of his marriage and religious life. In this regard, James White appears as a wounded warrior who did not abandon the battlefield of his faith, and although he fell, remained always loyal to his ideals.<sup>293</sup>

#### Ellen’s Independence

Ellen’s independence generated tension in the relationship with James. He wanted to control her agenda and her life in a way he had not previously, and adding to the difficulties of the relationship was Ellen’s withdrawal from the domestic scene to do the job in the field that demanded her presence. This independent attitude displeased James, who feared that others were taking his place as Ellen’s counselors. This led Ellen to exercise her freedom and independence even further and to stay away until the tension between them eased.<sup>294</sup>

An analysis of the information in the letters written by Ellen, especially the outburst ones to Lucinda in 1876, leads to the conclusion that there were two types of reasons for her behavior: missiological and psychological.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 281.

<sup>294</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 283.

<sup>295</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 283.

Regarding the missiological reasons, the letters mention that Ellen resisted James's control because she felt she had a duty to accomplish. Here, again, we see the centrality of their mission. Ellen's independence was not due to a personal whim, but her decision to be faithful to the ideals they both had adopted to serve God. She was conciliatory and concerned about James, but he was hindering her work.<sup>296</sup> Because of his attempts to dictate to her,<sup>297</sup> she said she could not "have confidence in James's judgment in reference" to her duty.<sup>298</sup>

Thus, (a) she needed to maintain independence at work, as she was under the direction of God and not her husband, and (b) she was being consistent with the dynamics of their marital team, which, until then, had united them through a single purpose while each had freedom of action. She also maintained consistency with the goal of the marital team, which was to fulfill the mission. Thus, Ellen's withdrawal was vital to her realization as a person and to the very meaning of her relationship with James. The mission was to be preserved and carried forward even at the price of momentary separation.<sup>299</sup>

Therefore, the separation between Ellen and James during the crisis was justified by the missiological reasons that maintained and gave meaning to their unity. As Lewin points out, "Within the group life conflicts depend upon the degree to which the goals of the members contradict each other" and their degree of unreadiness to consider each

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<sup>296</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 283.

<sup>297</sup> Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 66) May 16, 1876.

<sup>298</sup> Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 64) May 10, 1876.

<sup>299</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 284.

other's opinion.<sup>300</sup> In the Whites' marriage, the missiological meaning did not conspire against its unity. The separation was necessary and, ultimately, understood by James.

The second set of reasons for Ellen's temporary separation from James was psychological. These reasons can be clearly identified in statements by both of them. James's temperament, with the changes caused by the disease, produced disturbance where once there was balance. He increasingly tried to dominate and control his wife, and felt jealousy related to the loss of his position. Ellen tried to help her husband and stood beside him until she felt exhausted and worn out,<sup>301</sup> while maintaining her willingness to help him.<sup>302</sup> While Ellen acknowledged James's care for her when sick<sup>303</sup> and wanted to be with him during his illness,<sup>304</sup> things staying the same could have allowed the tension to reach the point of compromising the marriage. Since the care fell principally upon Ellen,<sup>305</sup> she needed some time "to recharge" her battery.<sup>306</sup>

Having the opportunity to 'recharge your batteries,' whether alone or with friends and family, is even more important when you are a caregiving spouse, especially if you are overloaded with heavy care demands or if you are providing care and also

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<sup>300</sup> Lewin, "The Background of Conflict in Marriage," 89-90.

<sup>301</sup> See the section "James's Recovery from the First Stroke and Ellen's Leadership," above.

<sup>302</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 285.

<sup>303</sup> "I had been all my life an invalid, and tenderly and patiently had my husband sympathized with, watched over, and cared for me when I was suffering" (Ellen G. White, "Early Counsels on Medical Work—No. 4: Blessings Through Prayer," *RH*, Apr 23, 1914, 3).

<sup>304</sup> "I have no special news to write you, except I greatly desire to see your face and look forward to the time with great pleasure" (Ellen G. White to James White, [Lt 44] July 17, 1874).

<sup>305</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 19) Sept 28, 1877.

<sup>306</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 286.

performing multiple other roles. As a caregiver, you have to make time to care for yourself—both to keep yourself healthy (physically and mentally) and to manage stress.<sup>307</sup>

Changes in the agenda of one spouse inevitably affect the other. This change was managed by Ellen in two stages: (a) staying with her husband while the mission could wait, and (b) continuing work without him, in view of his signs of improvement and the wear on the relationship due to the change in James's actions and speech. In this sense, Ellen's attitude is perfectly understandable and even commendable, because staying near her spouse increased his controlling attitude and risked both aspects most cherished by the couple themselves: the fulfillment of the mission and the marriage bond. Thus, Ellen leaving the scene functioned as a stress relief measure.<sup>308</sup>

Lewin declares that control exerted by one spouse increases tension because it reduces what he calls free space, a vital necessity for individual and marital health. This reduction in space in the framework of conflict presented was associated with the dominant significance of the relationship (the fulfillment of the mission), which gave meaning and organized the symbolic universe of their marriage, and provided consistency to the existence of the couple and meaning to their lives individually.<sup>309</sup>

Sometimes a tense situation cannot be resolved, leading one or both spouses to withdraw from the group, destroying the unity of the marriage.<sup>310</sup> James's desire to have

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<sup>307</sup> Sara Palmer and Jeffrey B. Palmer, *When Your Spouse Has a Stroke: Caring for Your Partner, Yourself, and Your Relationship* [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011], Kindle Edition.

<sup>308</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 286.

<sup>309</sup> Lewin, "The Background of Conflict in Marriage." Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 286.

<sup>310</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 286.

Ellen close and to control her worked as an external barrier to relieving tension. Ellen faced a dilemma: stay with her husband, which seemed to be the solution, or leave to accomplish the mission, which might seem strange at first for a kind wife. Since her leaving was not final—her spouse was either under the care of someone she could trust or recovered and working elsewhere—her decision was the most productive one. James was reasonably recovered and could be alone, and she followed his progress through daily correspondence with plans to reconnect at the proper time and in the proper conditions.<sup>311</sup>

Thus, Ellen’s withdrawal from the point of tension, and her pleasure in the field of work, prevented the relationship from being disrupted by excessive wear, allowed her to recover from the wear and from James himself, rescued the fulfillment of the mission, and maintained the marriage bond that lasted until James’s death.<sup>312</sup>

#### Confidences to Lucinda Hall

Another aspect to be considered is Ellen’s confidences in her letters to Lucinda Hall.<sup>313</sup> Conflict is an integral part of “any group whose members have a strong

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<sup>311</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 287.

<sup>312</sup> By the end of May 1876, a few weeks after the confidential letters had been sent to Lucinda, James and Ellen were together again, very busy writing, traveling, and preaching at camp meetings in Kansas, Missouri, and Iowa (Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, [Lt 30] May 28, 1876; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:37). The work demanded so much of them, as pointed out by Ellen, “I find when the entire burden of labor rests on your Father and myself, we do not find time and have not strength to write even letters” (Ellen G. White to William C. White, [Lt 31a] June 7, 1876; cf. Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, [Lt 31] June 7, 1876). When they finally arrived in Battle Creek at the beginning of July, they were “debilitated and run down like an old clock” (Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, [Lt 33] July 7, 1876; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:42). However, the meetings brought them “such satisfaction” as they had never felt before in other camp meetings (Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, [Lt 34] July 11, 1876; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:42). Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 287.

<sup>313</sup> Ellen G. White considered Lucinda a “twin sister indeed in Christ” (Ellen G. White to James White, [Lt 44] July 17, 1874; cf. Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, [Lt 48] July 14, 1875), “more than a

attachment.”<sup>314</sup> However, properly managing conflict prevents it from progressing to breaking up or violence. In this way, all relationships can last in the presence of conflict, even among people that God has chosen for His work.<sup>315</sup>

Certainly, once again, the idealization of heroes and pioneers of a community prevents their followers from accepting their humanity and imperfection. As a human being under stress because of the conflict, Ellen made use of her temporary absence from James as a strategy for stress relief. Moreover, she discussed the problem, so that verbalization could bring her release from the stress. In the absence of a trained professional, a trusted person who is not part of the problem and has social skills can relieve a suffering person by listening and sharing, as Lucinda did in Ellen’s case. Thus, the letters from Ellen to Lucinda, as well as the conversations they had when they met, were providential opportunities for Ellen during a time of conflict—not only desired, but recommended, since isolation theoretically does not provide the progress that sharing offers.<sup>316</sup> Ellen’s attitude can be considered desirable and beneficial for her, as it eased her tensions and helped her to deal with the problem.<sup>317</sup>

Furthermore, Lucinda had access to the Whites’s house and was close to the couple for many years; she was a Christian friend with whom Ellen talked about her problems and therefore was likely already aware of the whole situation exacerbated by

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sister” (Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, [Lt 72] October 20, 1874), and a “confidential companion” (Ellen G. White to James White, [Lt 63] March 25, 1876).

<sup>314</sup> Balswick and Balswick, *The Family*, 285; cf. 251–268, 285–298.

<sup>315</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 287–288.

<sup>316</sup> Balswick and Balswick, *The Family*, 289.

<sup>317</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 288.



James's disease. Ellen wrote, "You knew when you left there was no one I could speak with, however distressed I might be."<sup>318</sup> As this was not something new to Lucinda and did not hurt the secrecy of the couple, Ellen did not infringe any of her ethical values, especially since the content of the letters did not address intimate matters. So, her temporary and sporadic trips away, her involvement in work activities, and her letters to Lucinda constituted Ellen's therapeutic strategy to help herself during the crisis.<sup>319</sup>

Ellen's request for the destruction of the letters<sup>320</sup> can be considered as simply Victorian caution. According to correspondence manuals of the time, private letters were never to be accessed by the public. So, this was not due to their content, which Lucinda knew already from spending time at the Whites' house, but to social ethics.<sup>321</sup> The fact that Lucinda did not destroy the letters, could not be considered a dishonor of the trust of her friend, because despite not destroying the letters, Lucinda did keep them confidential during her lifetime. She protected Ellen's domestic affairs from public view. Perhaps Lucinda recognized that Ellen was just looking for a shoulder to cry on. But Lucinda's choice allowed future generations to gain a window into the lives of these key religious leaders and demonstrate that they were also vulnerable to universal human problems.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 67) May 17, 1876.

<sup>319</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 288.

<sup>320</sup> Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 67) May 17, 1876.

<sup>321</sup> Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth Century America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>322</sup> Up to this date no one has ever found any material that mentioned these letters before they were found in an old trunk that was acquired by Susan Jaquete, and came to belong to the White Estate in 1973. The collection contained about 2000 letters of which 39 were written by Ellen White and some by James White (A. L. White, "Ellen White Letters Discovered in Historical Collection," *RH*, August 16, 1973, 1,

In 1877, when James was once more recovering from another stroke, Ellen felt lonely, since even her best friend was engaged in many activities. She unburdened herself to her sons:

There is no soul I can go to for counsel or for help but Jesus. L. M. [Lucinda] Hall is so thoroughly engaged she can do nothing to help me in sharing my burdens. ... And Father is the last person in the world to whom I should go with any expectancy that he could get beyond himself sufficiently to appreciate my feelings. I must think and act all for myself. I so much long to have an interested God-fearing friend that I can talk and counsel with.<sup>323</sup>

### Edson White

The second son of the couple, James Edson, brought some turmoil to his parents. Both James and Ellen committed mistakes in raising their son. During his earliest years, because of the mission of his parents and the poverty of the early days of the Adventist movement, Edson was raised with different families. Edson's parents, James and Ellen White, were also rebuked for specific errors in the way they raised their children.<sup>324</sup> It is also noted that the Whites often made "unfavorable comparisons" between Edson and Willie, and that Edson was frequently reminded that he should care for and be an example for his little brother. Because of Edson's tendency to follow his own heart, which was not always in line with biblical principles and the counsel of his parents, Edson repeatedly received severe reproof.<sup>325</sup>

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10–11; Paul Gordon and Ron Graybill, "Letters to Lucinda: Excerpts from the Ellen White Messages Found in the Newly Discovered Collection," *RH* August 23, 1973, 4–7.

<sup>323</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 40) December 5, 1877; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:77–78.

<sup>324</sup> Ellen G. White, "Testimony for James and Ellen White's Family," Ms 8, 1862; idem, "Testimony Regarding James and Ellen White," Ms 1, 1863.

<sup>325</sup> Graybill, "Power of Prophecy," 63.

Thus, Edson grew up as an inventive but often non-successful entrepreneur. This brought disagreements with his parents, especially James, whom several times helped Edson financially. There were times when Edson was the cause of turbulence in the relationship of James and Ellen. On certain occasions, James felt that Ellen blamed him and was defending Edson. Distance was an easier palliative. “If mother would not always blame me when Edson abuses me,” wrote James, “I think I should consent to live in the same state.”<sup>326</sup>

This remark was a reflection of a long difficult relationship. When James got sick, and sometimes treated Edson in a harsh way, or tried to correct his adolescent son, Edson would be “impatient of restraint, and would not be restrained, especially by” his father. When James attempted to hold Edson back from pursuing a headstrong course, Edson reacted. Ellen appealed to Edson’s heart, reminding him that James was facing a challenging time concerning his mood and personality after his first stroke. “My soul is tried to the quick about these strange moves of your father,” wrote Ellen to Edson. She continued, “You must not lay to heart the course of your father. He is not himself. . . . You have not been treated as a father should treat a son.”<sup>327</sup> A few years later Edson wrote, “[I]f any attempt was made by him [his father James] to hold me from pursuing my wrong and headstrong course, I would willfully resist it, and cherish bitter, unchristian feelings against him.” Edson also confessed that he had contributed to “an impression held in the minds of many that [James] was unreasonable and severe in his treatment of,

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<sup>326</sup> James White to William C. White, June 7, 1876.

<sup>327</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 4) September 22, 1866; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 9) ca. 1866.

and dealings with” him.<sup>328</sup> At that time, Edson confessed his wrong attitudes and asked for forgiveness.

When James left California, he left the Pacific Press office in the charge of his sons Edson and William, but he trusted more in William, the younger son,<sup>329</sup> and placed him as the manager instead of Edson. When plans were laid for William to establish a publishing house in Europe, he was sent to Battle Creek College, and Edson was placed as the new manager in 1877. The decision was taken in a meeting that neither James nor Ellen attended. After about three years of poor management, James placed William again as the manager instead of Edson who was terminated from the Pacific Press.<sup>330</sup> Without denying that Edson had “acted foolishly in many things” and “failed” in business,<sup>331</sup> Ellen affirmed decades later that the decision of terminating Edson from the Pacific Press was taken by James in his illness, who “was not in his right mind,” despite the fact that Willie “knelt before” James “and begged him not to do the very thing he was purposing to do.”<sup>332</sup>

In a letter to Lucinda, Ellen pointed out some disagreement over the way she and James were dealing with Edson. “He has in his letters to me written harshly in regard to Edson,” wrote Ellen, and then quoted a letter James sent to her, “When you wish to make these statements in reference to your own son, please lay down your pen and stop just

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<sup>328</sup> James White, in *Defense of Eld. James White and Wife: The Battle Creek Church to the Churches and Brethren Scattered Abroad* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1870), 151–152.

<sup>329</sup> James White to William C. White, October 24, 1876.

<sup>330</sup> *SDA Encyclopedia*, s.v. “James Edson White”; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:133, 5:189; Poirier, *The Ellen G. White Letters and Manuscripts*, 905.

<sup>331</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 12) February 25, 1878.

<sup>332</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 391) [no date] 1906; cf. Moon, “W. C. White,” 52–54.

there. ... Leave me to be guided by the Lord in reference to Edson, for I still trust in His guiding hand and have confidence He will lead me.”<sup>333</sup>

Ellen wrote dozens of letters to Edson. She bitterly criticized him. She rebuked him in his adolescence for his “passion for reading storybooks” instead of studying;<sup>334</sup> and for playing with “guns and firearms,” which caused his parents “sadness and grief and much anxiety.”<sup>335</sup> As an adolescent Edson had kept “secrets” and “made no response” while his mother talked to him. Also, he hid from his parents his “notions and plans and fancies.” Sadly, Ellen wrote, “Edson, I cannot tell you how badly I have felt to have individuals tell me that I did not know you nor know what you were doing much of the time.”<sup>336</sup> Edson was rebuked for carelessness, selfishness, jealousy, irresponsibility in working and dealing with money, love of amusements, lack of thoroughness, not being a health reformer, etc.<sup>337</sup> It is noteworthy that in the letters Ellen applauded his efforts to overcome these difficulties, and she ended with an appeal and calling Edson’s attention to eternal life.

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<sup>333</sup> Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 66) May 16, 1876.

<sup>334</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and William C. White, (Lt 6a) Autumn, 1865.

<sup>335</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 7) October 19, 1865.

<sup>336</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 7) October 19, 1865.

<sup>337</sup> See e.g., Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 6) December 8, 1866; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 2) January 29, 1868; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 5) February 27, 1868; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 8) March 9, 1868; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 4) April 28, 1869; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 6) June 10, 1869; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 14) June 17, 1869; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 16) December 11, 1869. Ellen’s rebukes to Edson continued after his marriage too. See Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 8) May 6, 1871; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 2a) January 14, 1872; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 3) January 21, 1873; Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 13a) October 22, 1873; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 14) October 28, 1873; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 29) May 23, 1874, (Lt 30a) December [1875?] 1876, (Lt 6a) June 20, 1877, and (Lt 22) July 1, 1879.

This load of rebuking urged Edson to marry on the exact day he had completed twenty-one years of age, July 28, 1870. Though his parents did not feel he was ready for that step, they accepted, and James presided over the ceremony.<sup>338</sup>

In their father-son battle, Ellen “was often placed in a difficult position as intermediary.”<sup>339</sup> Several times, Ellen reproved Edson’s attitudes and defended James, but at other times she tried to calm James down and show him that Edson had repented.<sup>340</sup> In 1876, she deeply appealed to Edson, “above everything else, you need to encourage a love for your father. His life has been one of cankering care, of perplexity. His kindest efforts have been time and again abused.” She then reminded Edson, “You have not been shattered by paralysis,” and then unburdened, “But I have said and done all I could say and do, and now I must leave Father and you with the Lord.”<sup>341</sup>

In other moments, Ellen tried to open James’s eyes to see that his suspicions were unfounded. James affirmed that he had been trying to help Edson in every way, and censured Edson for being “willing to unsettle the confidence of the brethren [in California] in me [James] for the sake of building up himself.” In her answer, taking a clear position and demonstrating awareness of the complete situation, Ellen sustained that James was wrong. “I think you are entirely deceived in thinking that there is great

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<sup>338</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:310; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 6) June 10, 1869; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 7) June 27, 1869; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 16) December 11, 1869.

<sup>339</sup> A. Robinson, “James Edson White: Innovator,” in *Early Adventist Education*, ed. George R. Knight (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), 138; cf. Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 5) March 18, 1880; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:138–139.

<sup>340</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 1) March 31, 1876; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:23–24.

<sup>341</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 35) July 30, 1876.

prejudice against you [in California],” she wrote, and then emphatically affirmed, “Edson has done nothing of the kind you mention.” Though Edson had “some sense of his mistakes and he is going away pleasantly,” James was misjudging him. She thus counseled James to ask the help of the Lord “to put these suspicions out of your heart,” and wrote, “Let us not be so ready to vindicate our own course,” but “talk of Jesus, exalt Him, and let self sink into nothingness.” Then, she kindly concluded, “Forgive me for any words of impatience that have escaped my lips, every seeming act of wrong in your sight.”<sup>342</sup>

In a letter to William, Ellen rebuked him and James for lacking patience with Edson. “Because Edson failed in his enterprise of his office, I think both you and Father were too severe toward him,” Ellen wrote. Though not excusing Edson’s failures, she wrote that he was “unfortunate,” and had “needed help and encouragement many times when” he had not received it. She then recalled Edson’s infancy: “Edson has acted foolishly in many things,” but “the circumstances of his birth were altogether different than yours. His mother knows, but every one does not.”<sup>343</sup> While William was born when the family had a home and were always beneath the same roof, “Edson often found himself left in the care of one family and then another.”<sup>344</sup>

James did not agree with Ellen taking Edson’s side; when she tried to mediate the relationship between father and son, James believed she was agreeing with Edson and not him. He thought his family talked too much about his faults. “I also wish that the

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<sup>342</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 5) March 18, 1880.

<sup>343</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 12) February 25, 1878.

<sup>344</sup> Graybill, “Power of Prophecy,” 62.

members of my good family had not the difficulty, of long standing, of becoming very gifted over my faults as they imagine them to be.”<sup>345</sup> A few days later, in a letter to William, James pointed to Ellen as part of the problem and added,

I have probably been too much wounded at the perpetual faultfinding of my course by the members of my family. I am sure that if you [William] knew the effect of this upon my mind you would change your course towards me. Your mother has pursued this course till she has broken me down—soured me. And Edson has here found grounds for his course.<sup>346</sup>

A year later, he wrote to William and advised that Ellen not get involved in Edson’s business, because “You know what a fellow he is to lay the blame of his failures on others.”<sup>347</sup> However, as a father, James loved and had sympathy for his son, and Ellen pointed out to Edson. “Father, I am sure, has confidence in you. We often hear him speak of you and Emma with pleasure, in high terms. He shows your pictures, and he calls you two his canaries. He prays for you at the family altar very tenderly and earnestly.”<sup>348</sup> A year before his death, James spent a summer with Edson and Emma, and gladly wrote to his daughter-in-law, “Emma and Edson are here, and seem real good and interesting. I enjoy their society real well. This has been the happiest summer of my life. I see that I have grieved over things I could not help too much. I take time to think, rest, and sleep, and keep calm and happy.”<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> James White to William C. White and Mary K. White, February 27, 1879.

<sup>346</sup> James White to William C. White, March 10, 1879.

<sup>347</sup> James White to William C. White, March 12, 1880.

<sup>348</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 22) July 1, 1879.

<sup>349</sup> James White to Mary K. White, July 21, 1880.



This difficult relationship between James and Edson continued until James's death. It brought unhappiness to both James and Ellen. Ellen had to mediate the relationship on certain occasions, and though she usually took James's side, considering the irresponsibility of Edson, she had some turmoil with James over his harshness or impatience toward Edson.<sup>350</sup>

### Finances

In general, it can be said that finances were seldom a source of conflict between James and Ellen. However, though they both had the same view, which was helping others and the prosperity of the church and its institutions, they also held different opinions on certain aspects of finance.

Alden Thompson points out that James and Ellen, though they both "were deeply imprinted with the sturdy New England virtues of 'thrift and economy,'" and "were unstintingly generous to the Advent cause and to the people in need," had different views on how to deal with finances. James's view, with his entrepreneurial mindset, was "invest and share," while Ellen seemed to prefer "save and give." During the period stressed in this chapter, the Whites had already moved from a "near pennilessness" at the time of their marriage to "a more comfortable middle-class status."<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Cf. James White to Lucinda Hall, January 14, 1880; Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 5) March 18, 1880; Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 11) March 15, 1880; Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 13) March 17, 1880; Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 30) May 26, 1880. For a good summary of this parents-son relationship and the way it relatively impacted the relationship of James and Ellen, see Graybill, "The Power of Prophecy," 62-75; Moon, *W. C. White*, 42-54; Knight, *Walking with Ellen White*, 84-88.

<sup>351</sup> Alden Thompson, "Finances, Ellen G. White's," in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 819, 821.

In the year of 1869, slanderous reports and rumors surfaced against the Whites. Acquaintance with the Whites appeased prejudice.<sup>352</sup> Thus the church prepared a defense and published a small booklet in defense of James and Ellen White.<sup>353</sup> Before the publication they had asked that all who had accusations send them to Battle Creek to be analyzed.<sup>354</sup> In the response was exposed the Whites' financial situation. It presented his salary since 1861 and noted that Ellen White "received nothing for her services." It is interesting that in August 1865 when James "was stricken with paralysis," his "pay stopped." How could James support his family? By "the sale of Bibles, concordances, Bible dictionaries, Bible atlases, and works of this kind," real estate transactions, and sale of other things such as "writing papers and envelopes."<sup>355</sup> The booklet exposed the opinion of those who labored with the Whites and presented a very clear position. "[I]t is not true that he [James] has appropriated any of the funds passing through his hands to his own personal benefit." The article concluded affirming, "Every dollar of such money

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<sup>352</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:275–277; cf. Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 18) November 9, 1870; Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 21) November 29, 1871; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 3:91; idem, "Diary," Ms 5, 1872 (October 13).

<sup>353</sup> J. N. Andrews, G. H. Bell, and Uriah Smith, "The Defense of Elder James White and Wife," *RH*, April 26, 1870, 152; cf. Ja[me]s White and Uriah Smith, "Business Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Session of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists," *RH*, March 22, 1870, 109; *Defense of Eld. James White and Wife: Vindication of Their Moral and Christian Character* (Battle Creek: MI: Steam Press, 1870); *Defense of Eld. James White and Wife: The Battle Creek Church to the Churches and Brethren Scattered Abroad* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1870); Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:280–283; Wheeler, *James White*, 151–152.

<sup>354</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:277–278; J. N. Andrews, G. H. Bell, and Uriah Smith, "Defense of Eld. James White," *RH*, October 26, 1869, 144; James White, "Will They Respond?," *RH*, January 11, 1870, 24.

<sup>355</sup> *Defense of Eld. James White and Wife: Vindication* (1870), 9–13; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:281–282. In the booklet appeared several testimonies coming from positive responses of those who had been acquainted with the Whites and had seen first hand their work.

he has scrupulously accounted for to the proper persons appointed by our Association or General Conference to receive and examine such accounts.”<sup>356</sup>

Both James and Ellen had in mind the same purpose, to have money to help others and the church. James said that from about 1873 to 1878, it had been the Whites’ “pleasure to put fifteen thousand dollars into the several branches of the cause.”<sup>357</sup> Ten years later, Ellen reflecting on the Whites’ love for the cause, she penned, “I might build me costly houses if I wanted to, but I see all around me souls who are the purchase of the blood of Christ, and I want to see them in eternity with the white raiment on.” She was glad she with her could do some to the blessing others. “I do not begrudge a cent that I have put into the cause,” she continued, “and I have kept on until my husband and myself have about 30,000 invested in the cause of God.”<sup>358</sup>

Ellen was more economical, more of a saver, than was James. A difference in their style can be seen in some recorded episodes. Jim Nix, for example, mentions an interview he had with Ella, a granddaughter of James and Ellen, where she told that Ellen was urging James not to throw out a glass bottle. As James did anyway, Ellen “said in a mournful tone, ‘Oh, James, you might have saved the cork!’”<sup>359</sup> On another occasion,

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<sup>356</sup> *Defense of Eld. James White and Wife: Vindication* (1870), 8.

<sup>357</sup> James White, “Systematic Benevolence,” *RH*, September 12, 1878, 92.

<sup>358</sup> Ellen G. White, “Sermon/Living for God,” Ms 3, September 25, 1888; cf. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 81–83.

<sup>359</sup> Ella M. (White) Robinson, oral history interview conducted by James R. Nix, July 25, 1967; mentioned in James R. Nix, ed., *Passion, Purpose, and Power: Recapturing the Spirit of the Adventist Pioneers Today*, rev. and enl. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2013), 167–168.

when Willie was accompanying his mother in travel, James told Willie not to spare expense, but get Ellen what she needed.<sup>360</sup>

Ellen also regretted her saving mindset in some circumstances. When James was recovering from his first stroke, his wife purchased a chair to James, thus he could spend some time sit in a more comfortable chair and not spent the entire time lie down. Ellen said that the there was a chair “which was about fifteen dollars, but they offered” her “a very excellent chair, with rollers instead of rockers, price thirty dollars, for seventeen.” Thus she decided to buy a cheaper one based in counsel given to someone who was with her. This did not avoid rumors “report concerning ... extravagance in purchasing” that chair. Looking back to that experience, she regret it, “Had I the same to do over again, I would do as I did, with this exception: I would rely upon my own judgment, and purchase a chair costing a few dollars more, and worth double the one I got.”<sup>361</sup>

From November 1878 through the middle of spring of 1879 the Whites lived in Texas. While there they were very busy in preaching, writing, and helping local people that were ill and lived in poverty.<sup>362</sup> The Texas conference was organized in December 1878.<sup>363</sup> In Texas, James’s “entrepreneurial fever struck with intensity.” He “develop a scheme for buying mules in Texas and selling them for a profit in Colorado,” and “also embarked on a host of other ventures: buying buffalo and wildcat skins to sell in the

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<sup>360</sup> James White to William C. White, July 5, 1874.

<sup>361</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:594.

<sup>362</sup> Mary Ann Hadley, “Texas,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*.

<sup>363</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:101; Ellen G. White, “Campmeeting at Plano, Texas, and Illness in McDearmon Family,” Ms 3, November 1878; J[ames] W[hite], “Texas Camp-Meeting,” *RH*, December 5, 1878, 180; S. N. Haskell and R. M. Kilgore, “Organization of the Texas Conference, State T[ract] and M[issionary] Society, and S[abbath] S[chool] Association,” *RH*, December 5, 1878, 183.

Northeast, purchasing Michigan butter, nuts, and beans to sell in Texas.”<sup>364</sup> His wife did not approve those buying and selling business. Ellen also tried to dispel a probably negative image that Arthur Daniells and his wife, a young couple who was assisting the Whites, formed concerning James, and points out that they were called to preach not to be involved in business. “As I now view the matter,” Ellen penned, “I have no faith in my husband’s buying horses and mules; no faith in his trying to get the families he was interested in out of Texas. This is not his work; neither is it mine.” She looked back to that experience in Texas not with “pleasure, but with grief,” and as “a very sad chapter” in her experience. She claimed that their “time and minds should be wholly devoted to [their] specific work,” and she ends, “I hope you will not have a very unfavorable impression of my husband. He was surfeited while in Texas with the cares of business which he should never have had.”<sup>365</sup> It is clear that Ellen disapproved the aggressive way of investment James used to multiply his money, especially because it was robbing James energy from his line of duty, which should mainly be occupied in preaching and writing.

It seems that in the last house James purchased in late 1880, “a three-story, 16-room brick house ... on a hill overlooking the city of Battle Creek,”<sup>366</sup> Ellen “with her

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<sup>364</sup> Alden Thompson, “Finances, Ellen G. White’s,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 822; cf. James White to William C. White, January 17, 1879; James White to William C. White and Mary K. White, January 20, 1879; James White to William C. White, January 21, 1879; James White to William C. White, February 11, 1879; James White to William C. White, February 12, 1879; James White to William C. White and Mary K. White, February 27, 1879. For more details of their time in Texas, see Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:98–108; Wheeler, *James White*, 203–211.

<sup>365</sup> Ellen G. White to Arthur G. Daniells and Mrs. Daniells, (Lt 32) July 17, 1879.

<sup>366</sup> Hickerson and Campbell, “Homes of James and Ellen G. White,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 880; cf. James White to William C. White, November 10, 1880; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:149.

frugal Maine heritage, may have been uncomfortable with its elegance.”<sup>367</sup> The White couple lived there for less than a year, because James died in August 1881. Though the home “was just the place for the old folks,” and had “all the advantages of a country residence,”<sup>368</sup> after James’s death, and Ellen probably considering that “if past history is any indication, at least some in Battle Creek Adventist community would have resented it,” the house was sold.<sup>369</sup>

The Whites moved from a stage of extreme poverty to a comfortable middle-class. Both James and Ellen had a heart with a disposition to help others and were generous in giving for the prosperity of the Adventist cause. Nevertheless, they had some differences in the way they dealt with money; James was more an investor, while Ellen a saver. Generally speaking it was not an issue for them, but some times Ellen disagreed with James in the way he invested the money. Nevertheless, James attitude and vision helped the White family prosper financially.

#### Promoting Factors of James and Ellen’s Marriage

This study identified several promoting factors or potential promoters of James and Ellen’s marriage. Some of them are ambivalent factors—those that, depending on the time or circumstances of the individual disposition, can have “positive valence,”

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<sup>367</sup> Wheeler, *James White*, 98.

<sup>368</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White and Mary K. White, (Lt 45b) November 3, 1880.

<sup>369</sup> Wheeler, *James White*, 98.

functioning as promotion, or “negative valence,” acting as a barrier.<sup>370</sup> Some of these factors have already been mentioned when discussing the other categories, so will be briefly mentioned again only to characterize them.<sup>371</sup>

### Working Together

This promotion factor appears in the letters and is the positive valence of working with family. Normally, a job superimposed on a marriage can take first place in the life of one spouse or both and separate the conjugal group or dissolve it by abandonment. However, in the case of the Whites, their joined work functioned as a uniting factor.

It was a barrier and source of tension at times when they could not accompany each other or when James tried to exercise control over Ellen’s work. But, most of the time, their work was the dominant meaning and organizer of other meanings present in the life of the couple. Working together gave them company, converging mutual interests, shared achievement and a feeling of teamwork.<sup>372</sup>

### Mutual Appreciation: Respect, Affection, and Admiration

Another promoting factor in the Whites’s relationship was their mutual appreciation. This element is evident in the respect they each had for the skills or gifts of the other, as well as their affection and mutual admiration. James particularly respected

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<sup>370</sup> *Valence* is a term used in psychology (translated from the German *valenz*, used by Lewin) in discussing emotional attractiveness [positive] or aversiveness [negative] (Lewin, *Resolving Social Conflicts*, 59–60, 135, 155).

<sup>371</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 289.

<sup>372</sup> Ellen G. White, “Notes of Travel: The Cause in Vermont,” *RH*, November 20, 1883, 721. Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 289–290.

Ellen as a prophet, although he disagreed with some of her private opinions.<sup>373</sup> He maintained his positive conviction about Ellen's prophetic gift even during the critical periods of his disease.<sup>374</sup> Ellen, in turn, praised James's writing ability and preaching, his potential future in the mission, and his past accomplishments in those areas.<sup>375</sup> Thus, mutual appreciation strengthened the group, satisfying their need for recognition and bringing them closer as a marriage group.<sup>376</sup>

### The Whites' Religious Worldview

The third marriage promotion factor present in the letters was the religious worldview of the Whites. They lived with extraordinary conviction about the importance of the message they embraced. They feared that they would fail in the mission if one weakened the influence of the other or if they failed to do all the good they could in the time they had. They expected the imminent return of Jesus; James felt that God had commissioned him to be next to Ellen (in addition to being the husband and supporter of the prophetess), and she believed that God had a special work to do through both of them. Even during relationship crises, their religious worldview and their individual and joined prayers worked to reinforce their marriage ties as they wished to resume the work they

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<sup>373</sup> Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 66) May 16, 1876.

<sup>374</sup> James White, *A Solemn Appeal to the Ministry*; idem, *Spirit of Prophecy* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1878); idem, *The Spirit of Prophecy or Perpetuity and Object of the Gifts* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1880).

<sup>375</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 38) July 2, 1874; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:433.

<sup>376</sup> Lewin, "The Background of Conflict in Marriage." Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 290.



believed God had given them. In this sense, their religious belief—that they were in the world on a mission for God—gave extra meaning to their marriage.<sup>377</sup>

### Mutual Complementation

The fourth promotion factor was the complementation of the couple. Their temperaments were different, but their talents and roles in the marital relationship complemented each other. James was the leader, a strong personality, tireless organizer, entrepreneur, and excellent writer and speaker. Ellen was naturally shy, but also a strong-willed woman<sup>378</sup> and had the gift of prophecy. James was her counselor and took the position of supporting her in the transmission of her messages. Ellen recognized this mutual dependency. “[H]e was a great help to me in the work,” Ellen penned in the 1860s, and continued, “Without him I could accomplish but little, but with his help, in the strength of God, I could do the work assigned me.”<sup>379</sup> In 1874, she wrote, “Father, I fear, would not do as well if I should leave him. We ought to labor unitedly together.”<sup>380</sup> Three years later she declared, “God has a great work for him and me. We shall have strength to perform it.”<sup>381</sup>

After the death of her husband, Ellen missed James greatly, especially when in Colorado. As a widow of just a few days, she sadly penned, “I am fully of the opinion

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<sup>377</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 290.

<sup>378</sup> Knight, *Walking with Ellen White*, 72.

<sup>379</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:575.

<sup>380</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 27) May 15, 1874; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:430.

<sup>381</sup> Ellen G. White to J. Edson White and Emma White, (Lt 19) September 28, 1877.

that my life was so entwined or interwoven with my husband's that it is about impossible for me to be of any great account without him."<sup>382</sup> Several years later she wrote to a friend, "But how I miss him! How I long for his words of counsel and wisdom! How I long to hear his prayers blending with my prayers for light and guidance, for wisdom to know how to plan and lay out the work!"<sup>383</sup>

James and Ellen unquestionably formed a ministerial team in which each one completed the other in married life and mission.<sup>384</sup>

#### The Accession of James to the Ideals of the Couple and His Repentance

James's commitment to their marital ideals stands out, as discussed above, in several ways. First, he was committed to the mission as an important meaning for the couple, which also contributed to the marriage team as an adding factor to the relationship.<sup>385</sup> Second, he respected the prophetic gift of his wife and firmly believed he had been designed to be at Ellen's side in her prophetic ministry, playing a dual role in the marital relationship as husband and prophetess supporter. This role of supporter was an additional sacred meaning of their marriage and an element that could strengthen the group.<sup>386</sup> Third, he showed an attitude of humble repentance and sought reconciliation with God in his letters of apology for ignoring the warnings of his wife regarding his

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<sup>382</sup> Ellen G. White to William C. White, (Lt 17) September 22, 1881.

<sup>383</sup> Ellen G. White to Mrs. A. H. Robinson, (Lt 196) November 27, 1899.

<sup>384</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 290–291.

<sup>385</sup> Lewin, "The Background of Conflict in Marriage."

<sup>386</sup> Lewin, "The Background of Conflict in Marriage."

physical and spiritual health. This humble and conciliatory attitude reaffirmed the marital bond during and after the critical period of James's disease. Therefore, James's adherence to their ideals and his humble repentance were promoter elements of their marital relationship.<sup>387</sup>

In the last years of his life James demonstrated an attitude of reconciliation in some moments. Writing to his son William, he confessed, "It is my nature to retaliate when pressed above measure. I wish I was a better man."<sup>388</sup> About eighteen months later he cried for help again, "Where I have erred, help me to be right. I see my mistakes and am trying to rally. I need the help of yourself, Mother and Haskell."<sup>389</sup> During a time when James was in the east and Ellen on the west coast, and he desired her company,<sup>390</sup> he penned,

Your letter of today did me much good. We have our praying seasons and they are indeed seasons of much interest and profit. ... We always remember you and the cause on the Pacific coast in our prayers. ... Your appeals in reference to drawing nigh to God and manifesting a spirit of love [and] tenderness, I approve with all my heart. These things are doing me good.<sup>391</sup>

Near the end of the five months they spent away from each other, James declared to Ellen, "My feelings of pity are drawn out for those worn servants of the Lord, and for

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<sup>387</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 291–292.

<sup>388</sup> James White to William C. White and Mary K. White, February 27, 1879.

<sup>389</sup> James White to William C. White, July 5, 1880.

<sup>390</sup> James White to Ellen G. White, March 20, 1880; James White to Ellen G. White, April 4, 1880; James White to Ellen G. White, April 7, 1880.

<sup>391</sup> James White to Ellen G. White, March 2, 1880.

the bleeding cause. And as I labor for them I forget myself, and the injuries done me. Come home and see this new convert, if the Lord will.”<sup>392</sup>

Confession, repentance, and forgiveness are not weaknesses, but come out of strength. Throughout the marital relationship of James and Ellen can be detected problems, tensions, and disagreements, but also an attitude to restore the relationship. “Restoration can only take place when there is confession and repentance plus forgiveness,”<sup>393</sup> and these traits were present in the less than perfect Whites’s relationship.

#### Ellen’s Personality

Most of the letters from Ellen to James reveal the dynamics of the relationship and their roles within the marriage. Again, the nineteenth-century culture, in which the man assumed the dominant role in the relationship, is evident in the content of the letters written by Ellen. It is important to mention that she wrote frequently to him; for a period of forty-five days, in 1876, she did it almost every day, although James did not respond with the same frequency.<sup>394</sup>

During another five-month period in 1880, when James was pastoring the church in Battle Creek, busy with publications and administrative duties, Ellen went to the west

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<sup>392</sup> James White to Ellen G. White, July 23, 1880.

<sup>393</sup> Garland, *Family Ministry*, 358, 360.

<sup>394</sup> From March 31 to May 16, 1876, there are thirty-one letters addressed to James White (Lts 1, 1a, 2, 3, 4, 4a, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 16a, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 25a, 26, 27, 63). She even apologized for being too repetitive: “Dear Husband: I expect you will get wearied with my letters. There is such a sameness in them” (Ellen G. White to James White, [Lt 16] April 28, 1876). Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 292.

coast with Willie, and wrote at least thirty letters to James.<sup>395</sup> He also wrote some to her, but not as frequently.<sup>396</sup> In these letters Ellen detailed where she was going and what she was doing, wrote about her health and other issues, and both expressed loneliness and wrote words of encouragement.

Ellen's personality is evident in the letters. Taking a random sample of eight letters<sup>397</sup> written during a period of tension when they were working in separate places, five aspects stand out: *submission, humility, affection, concern for James, and an attitude of reconciliation.*<sup>398</sup>

The first trait of Ellen's personality that appears in these letters is *submission*. This is evident in her care to tell James where she was going, what she was doing, and whom she was with. She gave reports of her daily activities; waited for his "orders" to make household decisions; and informed him who was accompanying her in her trips and activities. The letters continually say that she was accompanied by women or, relatives, working on her writings or praying for him, and in one of them she assured him that she was not using her freedom more than necessary:

In regard to my independence, I have had no more than I should have in the matter under the circumstances. I do not receive your views or interpretation of my

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<sup>395</sup> (Lt 5a) February 14; (Lt 7) February 27; (Lt 9) March 11; (Lt 10) March 12; (Lts 11 and 12) March 15; (Lt 13) March 17; (Lt 5) March 18; (Lt 16) March 24; (Lt 49) March 25; (Lt 17a) April 1; (Lt 18) April 2; (Lt 19) April 6; (Lt 20) April 7; (Lt 20a) April 13; (Lt 21) April 15; (Lt 22) April 16; (Lt 23) April 17; (Lt 24) April 19; (Lt 25) April 23; (Lt 26) April 23 [pieces from April 23–29]; (Lt 27) May 2; (Lt 27a) May 16; (Lt 28) May 20; (Lt 29) May 20 [pieces from May 20–23]; (Lt 30) May 26; (Lt 33) June 6; (Lt 33a) June 23; (Lt 53) July?; (Lt 35) July 23.

<sup>396</sup> March 4, 8, 20, 24, 31; April 4, 7, 11, 15, 16; May 1, 9, 17, 21; July 4, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.

<sup>397</sup> All from 1876: (Lt 3) April 4; (Lt 5) April 11; (Lt 7) April 14; (Lt 9) April 18; (Lt 11) April 20; (Lt 16) April 28; (Lt 25) May 12; and (Lt 27) May 16.

<sup>398</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 292.

feelings on this matter.<sup>399</sup>

Ellen indicated her independence, but the letters emphasize that this referred to her mission; she mentioned in one letter that she was about “to remain in California and do my writings” and later wrote, “I would not allow anyone to call me from my work.” However, in the same paragraph, when the subject changed to the purchase of a horse or carriage for the couple’s use, she waited for James’s decision. While Ellen thought she was entitled to it, she sought her husband’s opinion and approval for the purchase, as well as in other matters.<sup>400</sup> She often asked him, “What do you think of this?”<sup>401</sup> regarding common decisions, such as what to buy, sell, time to publish a book,<sup>402</sup> what to include or avoid in a biographical sketch,<sup>403</sup> etc.

In reference to furnishing [the] new house, please send in your orders as to what furniture you want and your wishes shall be complied with. It is your house and of course you have the right to say how it shall be furnished. ... In regard to our pictures, how many shall we order[?] ... Everyone thinks [that] these last from Dunham’s are perfect. What is your judgment?<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 25) May 12, 1876. Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 292.

<sup>400</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 292–293.

<sup>401</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 25) May 12, 1876.

<sup>402</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 4a) April 8, 1876.

<sup>403</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 20) May 1, 1876. She then gives her own opinion, but reemphasizes that she honors her husband’s views, and adds, “Please write something in regard to the matter. We want you to state your views freely.” Some days later she continued asking for his advice on the best way of writing her autobiography, “I would be glad to hear some expression from you in reference to the *Signs*. How do you like the way we are getting out my life? What do you think of it?” (Ellen G. White to James White, [Lt 21] May 5, 1876; cf. Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 23) May 10, 1876.

<sup>404</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 3) April 4, 1876; cf. Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 1a) March 24, 1876; (Lt 8) April 16, 1876; (Lt 12) April 21, 1876; (Lt 14) April 25, 1876; (Lt 17) April 31, 1876; (Lt 21) May 5, 1876.

Therefore, her independence, in harmony with other statements, refers to her work as a prophetess, but the letters contain elements of submission from Ellen to James in other aspects of life. Graybill argues that Ellen would “emerge as the dominant figure in the home and an independent leader in the church” in the last fifteen years of their marriage, which he attributes to the change of roles due to James’s illness.<sup>405</sup> Thus, agreeing with the analysis of this author, this independence must refer only to her work, as the relationship between patient and caregiver is one of care and not of domination.<sup>406</sup> Domination, in literature, is seen as an asymmetry in gender relations, cultural and naturalized, but that was not Ellen’s posture after James’s disease. The periods of James’s illness required the addition of new roles, and Ellen, the wife, now also became the caregiver.<sup>407</sup>

In the analysis of the central meaning of the Whites’s marriage, we have seen that even during James’s illness, Ellen kept a submissive attitude, declaring independence only for two interconnected reasons: matters of conscience and compliance with her prophetic mission.<sup>408</sup> In addition, the data characterize the relationship of the Whites as a complementary partnership that was important for the fulfillment of the mission. James’s disease awakened in him a desire to control Ellen,<sup>409</sup> but we do not have sufficient data to

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<sup>405</sup> Graybill, “The Power of Prophecy,” 25.

<sup>406</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 293.

<sup>407</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 293.

<sup>408</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:431–432.

<sup>409</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:431.

determine whether Ellen wished to control James, despite her independence in traveling and working alone.<sup>410</sup>

As she explained, submission was part of her conception of marriage, except in matters of conscience: “We women must remember that God has placed us subject to the husband. He is the head and our judgment and views and reasonings must agree with his if possible. If not, the preference in God’s Word is given to the husband where it is not a matter of conscience. We must yield to the head.”<sup>411</sup>

Ellen did not understand submission as associated with circumstantial reasons, but as a biblical principle. To give up this principle would be a self-contradiction, an incoherence that is not identified as we refine and expand the analysis of the data. Her independence was, therefore, limited to her prophetic mission, given by God and superior to the husband’s authority. While submissive, she would not be subjugated.

Ellen excepted herself from submission in matters of “conscience” because she considered it a “duty” for the cause, for which she should not submit to her husband, since he could not accompany her. Once again we see the centrality of the mission as the dominant meaning in the life of the couple, which supported Ellen’s freedom and independence—not independence from the marriage, but to fulfill the purpose of both their lives, which continued even after the death of James.<sup>412</sup>

Another aspect of Ellen’s personality that appears in the letters is her *humility* in the face of their marital tensions due to James’s temperament and disease. She repeatedly

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<sup>410</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 293–294.

<sup>411</sup> Ellen G. White to Mary Loughborough, (Lt 5) 1861, 2; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 431.

<sup>412</sup> Ellen G. White, *Daughters of God*, 274. Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 294.



apologized for worrying him, although she was disapproving of behavior that he himself would later recognize as wrong;<sup>413</sup> she apologized for letting a day pass without writing to him, and her arguments always had a conciliatory tone due to the marital tensions.<sup>414</sup>

A third aspect evidenced in the letters is Ellen's need for *affection*. She clearly mentioned that she needed James's support, and complained that he did not respond and give his opinions about her feelings, asking him to write her. Then, she wrote about her sadness and need for affection that she fulfilled in God and explained that she missed from James. However, for Ellen the God-given mission was always first.<sup>415</sup>

The fourth aspect of Ellen's personality in the marital relationship that stands out is her *concern for James's health*. She revealed that she was "anxiously waiting" to hear from him,<sup>416</sup> "very sad" that he was sick,<sup>417</sup> and "so glad" when she received news that her husband was fine.<sup>418</sup> She asked for prayers on behalf of the "dear husband" for body strength and a clear mind. The theme is also present in her letter of outburst to Lucinda Hall: "How is James' health? I had a dream that troubled me in reference to James."<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:426–429.

<sup>414</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 295.

<sup>415</sup> Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 295.

<sup>416</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 5) April 11, 1876.

<sup>417</sup> Ellen G. White to James White., (Lt 9) April 18, 1876; Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 11) April 20, 1876.

<sup>418</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 7) April 14, 1876.

<sup>419</sup> Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, (Lt 66) May 16, 1876.

This concern for her husband's health was always present in Ellen's messages to him, particularly due to his overwork and disease.<sup>420</sup>

The final aspect is her *conciliatory attitude*. During the crisis, Ellen showed a consistently conciliatory attitude toward the tensions generated by James's behavior. In her letters to him there are no attacks, accusations, or even personal deprecations. Ellen preserved and supported her husband, even when she disagreed with him, and asked for his opinion, as in the case of her independence to work; she mentioned waiting "anxiously" for his answers. She also asked him "please" to write something about the things in her letter<sup>421</sup> and revealed that she would be sad if she had "said or written anything" that grieved, annoyed, or distressed James. She expressed concern that they had "differences to separate [their] feelings," admitted that she was wrong, apologized, and promised to never again say or write anything that could disturb him.<sup>422</sup> So Ellen

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<sup>420</sup> Cf. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:426–429. "We have felt some anxious in regard to your health on account of the change of climate at this season of the year. It must be trying to your system, but we hope you will take the best of care of yourself, that your health may not suffer. I hope that this journey will be indeed to you a season of rest rather than toil. I shall press through my work as fast as possible. We pray every day and many times through the day that God would guide you in judgment, [and] impart to you heavenly wisdom. We believe that He will do for us the things we ask of Him" (Ellen G. White to James White, [Lt 5] April 11, 1876; cf. Ellen G. White to James White, [Lt 6] April 13, 1876; Ellen G. White to James White, [Lt 7] April 14, 1876). Silva and Gerson, "The Conjugal Experience," 295.

<sup>421</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 5) April 11, 1876.

<sup>422</sup> Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 27) May 16, 1876. In the same letter, she wrote, "We are living in a most solemn time and we cannot afford to have in our old age differences to separate our feelings. I may not view all things as you do, but I do not think it would be my place or duty to try to make you see as I see and feel as I feel. Wherein I have done this, I am sorry. ... I do not claim infallibility, or even perfection of Christian character. I am not free from mistakes and errors in my life. Had I followed my Saviour more closely, I should not have to mourn so much my unlikeness to His dear image. ... No more shall a line be traced by me or expression made in my letters to distress you. Again, I say forgive me, every word or act that has grieved you." In 1880, while trying to conciliate James and the brethren in California, Ellen wrote a long letter to James rebuking his attitudes several times, but then she concludes, "Forgive me for any words of impatience that have escaped my lips, every seeming act of wrong in your sight" (Ellen G. White to James White, [Lt 5] March 18, 1880). Cf. Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 11) March 15, 1880, (Lt 13) March 17, 1880, and (Lt 30) May 26, 1880).

played an important role in the conciliatory mood of the couple.<sup>423</sup> Ellen also had an important role as mediator both with family members and others they worked with.<sup>424</sup>

Thus, Ellen can be described as a submissive, humble, and conciliatory wife who recognized her needs and made them explicit to her husband, but found relief in the spiritual life through faith and prayer, while she constantly cared for the health of her husband. These characteristics point to her acceptance of James, even during the tensions, which created a stable psychological ground for both in the relationship.<sup>425</sup> However, Ellen dared not tie herself to her husband to the point of giving up their ideal of living for the mission. Thus, the submissive Ellen in the relationship was also the independent Ellen, moderator and promoter of her marriage, never denying or compromising it, even during the most difficult times.<sup>426</sup>

A study of 3,000 families presented six main qualities of strong families. They “(1) are committed to the family; (2) spend time together; (3) have good family communication; (4) express appreciation to each other; (5) have a spiritual commitment; and (6) are able to solve problems in a crisis.”<sup>427</sup> All of these characteristics can be identified in the marital relationship of James and Ellen White.

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<sup>423</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 296.

<sup>424</sup> See e.g., Ellen G. White to J. Edson White, (Lt 35) July 30, 1876; Ellen G. White to James White, (Lt 5) March 18, 1880.

<sup>425</sup> Lewin, “The Background of Conflict in Marriage.”

<sup>426</sup> Silva and Gerson, “The Conjugal Experience,” 296.

<sup>427</sup> Nick Stinnett and John DeFrain, *Secrets of Strong Families* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985); cited in Van Pelt, *Highly Effective Marriage*, 20. Cf. John DeFrain, “Strong Families Around the World,” *Family Matters* 53 (Winter 1999): 6–13.

## Conclusion

This chapter described and analyzed the major facts, situations, and context that affected the marital relationship of James and Ellen during their last sixteen years together, from 1865, when James suffered his first paralytic stroke, until 1881, when he died. It was a challenging time, but also the most mature phase of their relationship. The letters exchanged between the Whites present tensions in certain periods of their marriage. During those conflicts it is evident that the strokes affected James's attitudes causing personality traits already present to become more extreme. Though Ellen was an effective caregiver, as James became more demanding and Ellen was unaware of the extent of the damage, it resulted in honest confrontation and turmoil.

When James suffered his first stroke on August 16, 1865, and thought he would die, his wife became his caregiver. As he was forced into temporary retirement, Ellen was beside him to stop him from falling into a depressive state, keeping him active both physically and mentally. This caregiver attitude made all the difference in James's recovery. However, as soon as James recovered he resumed his workaholic lifestyle, which led him to other strokes. The SDA leaders saw energy and a visionary leadership in James that made him almost irreplaceable as an administrator. This challenged the relationship of the Whites, as Ellen advised James to slow down.

James and Ellen were hardworking people. Having mission as their priority, they did whatever was necessary to reach souls and prosper the infant church. However, with his workaholic lifestyle, James brought consequences upon himself. His many responsibilities, anxiety over resolving doctrinal issues in some places, seeing others do the work carelessly, and sense of ingratitude from his peers resulted in a breakdown of

his health. He not only damaged his health with his intemperance in labor, but also sinned against God.

James's illness brought Ellen the new responsibility of being his caregiver. In this, she was a caring wife who stayed close to her husband with a real desire to see him resume his role as a preacher and defender of the "present truth." This process of recovery required great efforts from Ellen. She gave her attention almost wholly to James's care. She feared losing her husband to death. She also recognized she had been sick for a great part of their marriage, and James had patiently sympathized with, watched over, and taken care of her. In order to help her feeble husband, Ellen assumed leadership and made decisions that were sometimes against the advice of family, friends, and even physicians. Though at the time there was not enough research to understand the effects of a stroke and how to care for a stroke patient, Ellen did good work.

Despite James's recovery, he went back to the same excesses in working and mental strain, which resulted in other minor strokes. The sequence of four or five strokes during their last fifteen years together affected James's mood and behavior, leading to depression, frustration, irritability, anger, and demands for attention. He suffered with that because he recognized that his attitudes were often short of Christian virtues. Ellen also made mistakes. During that period she faced menopause, thought she would die, and on some occasions lost patience and did not understand the real problems her husband was facing. Several times she had to ask forgiveness for words or attitudes that did not contribute to the welfare of James.

Throughout all of this period, the intensity of work suffocated both James and Ellen. Writing, traveling, preaching, and dealing with church and family problems made

up their constant schedule. The fact that Ellen was not directly involved in administrative affairs, though she was constantly involved in writing, counseling, and rebuking the leaders, likely saved her from some of the burdens James carried as the main administrator and founder of most of the SDA church institutions.

During the period examined in this chapter, based on the primary sources written by James and Ellen, four major episodes of relationship stress can be identified, in 1868, 1871, 1874, and 1876. In the last years of James's life, especially during 1879–1881, another problem surfaced concerning the question of influence: James felt Ellen was being influenced against him when he had conflicts with his peers. Their surviving letters expose the problems, but also present the other side of the coin, as they confessed their faults to each other, cried and prayed together, and each showed a deep interest in the welfare of their loved partner. Their differences were mainly resolved because they had the same goals, their priority was mission, and they had a deep sense of what marriage meant.

To understand the marital relationship of James and Ellen in the context of the nineteenth century, this research adopted the following objectives: (1) to describe and analyze the meanings and practices of the marital relationship of the Whites based on the correspondence and literature they wrote, and (2) to identify consistencies or inconsistencies between their speech and their practice concerning to their marriage.

The examination of the documents allowed the construction of data sets and was organized into three thematic blocks or categories: (1) the dominant meaning of the Whites's marriage, (2) barriers in the relationship, and (3) the promoting factors or potential promoters of the relationship. In the thematic block of the dominant meaning of

the Whites's marriage, two sub-themes were highlighted: demonstrate what the marriage of the Whites was not and explore their marriage as a union whose dominant meaning was compliance with the mission.

Though the private correspondence between James and Ellen lacks elaborate expressions of love or content centered on marital intimate affections, indicating a marriage without the romantic features of their time, this does not mean there were no expressions of conjugal love or tender care. The main point of the letters was how they could better serve God's cause. The predominant themes in basically all the letters are work, mission, duty, and religious themes. Mission was the priority, and James illness was an unfortunate obstacle to it. The letters present that both seemed generally satisfied with their relationship. While the essential marital plans of the couple are legitimate, James and Ellen were experiencing something more. Their symbolic universe indicates a clear commitment to their religious life, and they could not live otherwise.

Individual or group coherence is created by consistency between practice and meaning. In this sense, biographical or autobiographical data from James and Ellen, when compared with the material analyzed, points to the fact that their practices were consistent with their speeches. The marriage of the Whites may seem old-fashioned, but even during James's crisis, the divergent opinions between him and Ellen, or their renunciation of a home life with their children, the couple never lost sight of the supreme reason that united them. In no way did this diminish the love they had for each other; it shows that at no time or place did their marriage become inconsistent or incoherent with its central reference of life. Their sense of teamwork strengthened their marital bond. Their marriage cannot be considered empty or meaningless. Rather, the data point to an

intense union with a mission. James and Ellen's efforts were well defined and objective, always preoccupied with how to synchronize marriage and mission.

The couple also faced barriers in their marital relationship. Both James and Ellen recognized their limitations and weaknesses. They never claimed infallibility; on the contrary, they frequently asked forgiveness of each other. There were other barriers too: James's personality and his disease, which led to a rupture, unsatisfied need, and loss of meaning when James found himself unable to carry out the mission that occupied the center of his personal and marital life. In this process of transition, James faced the loss of his place in church business and could not accompany Ellen every time. This brought insecurity, and developed into complaints, mistrust, jealousy, guilt, regret for his conduct, and finally confessing his mistake. This process unfolded until James's death.

Another barrier was Ellen's independence. At some moments, James tried to control her agenda and her life in a way he had not previously, fearing that others were taking his place as Ellen's counselors. This directed Ellen to exercise her freedom and independence even further and to stay away until the tension between them eased. She needed to maintain independence at work, as she was under the direction of God and not her husband, and she was being consistent with the dynamics of their marital team, which had united them through a single purpose. Ellen also maintained consistency with the goal of the marital team, which was to fulfill the mission. The mission was to be preserved and carried forward even at the cost of temporary separation. Another reason for Ellen's momentary separation from James was psychological. Ellen's attitude that functioned as a stress relief measure is understandable and even creditable, because staying near James increased his controlling attitude and risked both aspects they most



cherished: the fulfillment of the mission and the marriage bond. As a human being under stress because of the conflict, Ellen made use of her temporary absence from James as a strategy for stress relief and discussed the problem with her best friend, so that verbalization could help her as well.

Edson White, the second son of the couple, also brought turmoil to the Whites's relationship. Because of Edson's tendency to follow his own heart, contrary to biblical principles and the counsel of his parents, he was rebuked many times for his irresponsible attitude, which on certain occasions caused financial loss for the Whites. The way James and Ellen dealt with Edson's attitude caused some conflict. Though Ellen wrote several letters rebuking Edson, she was also often placed in a difficult position as intermediary between father and son.

This study identified the following promoting factors in James and Ellen's marriage: working together; a mutual appreciation that included respect, affection, and admiration of each other; their religious worldview; mutual complementation; and their commitment to their marital ideals. A last promoting factor noted in this study was Ellen's personality. When James's personality was affected, Ellen as the caregiver was also affected, but she supported the recovery and stability of her husband. Five aspects of Ellen's personality stand out as essential for the welfare and strength of their marital bond: submission, humility, affection, concern for James, and an attitude of reconciliation.

The Whites can be described as a functional pair who faced marital conflicts in some phases of their conjugal life. These conflicts are understood as elements inherent in the developmental process of groups and individuals, and did not affect the central

aspects of their marriage. James and Ellen were consistent with their values, beliefs, and ideals, and they presented meanings of accomplishment and mutual satisfaction in their lifetime trajectory as a conjugal group and as individuals.

## CHAPTER 7

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This research was a documentary study on the marital relationship of James and Ellen White. The main sources for this study were the documents produced by the couple, both published and unpublished writings. To analyze whether their marriage was successful and functional or not, the study drew on theoretical concepts used by Kurt Lewin, who made a seminal contribution to the understanding of marriage as a type of group. The study also included a brief dialogue with modern concepts of family issues, especially in sources that approach marriage and family from a biblical perspective.

#### Summary

This section presents an overview of the first six chapters of this study. The research sought to uncover the meanings the Whites built for their marriage, based on the documents they produced. The research operated from the presupposition that their letters and autobiographical works present an accurate description of their reality that is adequate to understand and analyze their marital relationship. Chapter 2 had the primary purpose of understanding the marital relationship of the Whites in the social, cultural and religious contexts of the nineteenth century. In the culture of the time in which they lived, and based on the meanings exposed in the extant literature by the White couple, the research looked for consistencies or inconsistencies in their speech and practice with regard to their marital life. Unquestionably, communication in a relationship goes beyond letters exchanged: it takes place more through words and nonverbal behaviors used to

interpret those words, such as tone of voice and inflection. Further, letters cannot expose the complete scope of the Whites's relationship, since they spent most of their time together. So, most of their conversations are not available, either in their own writings or in the writings of others. However, this does not invalidate the study, which examined sensitive letters written in critical periods of their lives: not formal letters intended for public consumption, but frank, open hearted, intimate letters. At one time, Ellen, sorry for venting too much, even asked that some of them be destroyed.

James and Ellen accepted the biblical concept that marriage is expected to continue for a lifetime, though it can be interrupted or terminated at any time. Another important aspect of marriage is that a functional marital relationship does not mean absence of problems, nor does this absence indicate a lack of family strength. In reality, tensions and problems may stimulate a family to develop greater resilience and coping skills. The mark of a family's strength is not the absence of conflict, but the successful management of conflict when it arises. Definitely, the marital relationship of the Whites was not free of problems. Differences and difficulties surfaced regularly. But they understood, as the years went by, that maintaining an effective long-term marriage means working to honor the commitment made at the beginning of the relationship, and effective conflict management is as essential as compatibility and commitment.

Chapter 3 presented the family backgrounds and biographical sketches of James and Ellen White prior to the beginnings of their personal relationship.

The next three chapters divide the thirty-plus years of the Whites's marriage (from 1846 until James's death in 1881) into three periods. Chapter 4 showed that during the first ten years (1846–1855), their marital relationship was tested by severe poverty,

lack of means, several illnesses, the birth of their first three children, and a time in which their leadership in the small Sabbatarian group was accepted but also challenged. This period was not an easy one, but served as the basis to solidify an affectionate love built among difficulties and trials.

Chapter 5 showed that the second phase (1855–1865) of their relationship was marked by more frequent letter-writing than the previous period (or at least more letters are extant). The letters point to a solidified relationship in which distance from each other was not desirable, and their affective dependence was normally expressed. Their home was a refuge where the Whites found attachment and belonging. Though no expressions of a *passionate* relationship were evident, several expressions of affection, care, and deep love described their mutual interest and devotion. The family was maturing, and their love achieved a level of maturity that served as support for the rest of their lives.

Chapter 6 showed that the third and last period (1865–1881) was a time when they, especially James, began to experience the negative consequences of a long-term excess of work and a frequently unbalanced lifestyle. The extant letters from the first two decades of their marriage show some differences, but no major crisis between them. In the second half of their marital life, a few letters point to some crises, and it is evident that James's health problems played a major role in those crises.

Their love and relationship, however, survived these situations. Though they had always believed in the indissolubility of the marriage, these situations revealed that even during marital crises, they continued to support each other and to show deep care, affection, and love for each other. It was not all peaceful, but they had stored up the

experience of a meaningful affection and deep love exercised and lived during the past years.

Also, during this third period (1865–1881), Ellen made the transition from a young adult under forty, who was often ill and appeared dependent on her husband's help, to a strong woman who, when James succumbed to repeated strokes, had the confidence to take charge of the situation, make important decisions, and take responsibility for those decisions. Though her actions on his behalf were initially discredited by even her husband and his parents, and severely criticized by the Battle Creek church, in the end she proved to be right and was acknowledged as fully dedicated to the restoration and betterment of her husband. Her determination to take charge of his care did not spring from an attitude of dominance, but revealed an attitude of someone who deeply loved a partner, and would fight with all her strength to save that person.

As James suffered several more strokes, he periodically isolated himself from others. The isolation not only lowered his self-esteem, but often led to an unforgiving spirit and extreme authoritarianism, traits that made it difficult for others to live or work with him. These were the most strained times for the Whites's relationship.

However, despite the hurt and anger that sometimes arose, their love led them to focus on forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration of the relationship. This dynamic was constant in the marital relationship of the Whites. Though they showed their frustration and anger, which led to distrust and deliberate separation for a while, their words convey a sense of unhappiness and a desire to be working together. They agreed that on certain occasions it was best to be away from each other for a while, but as soon as they were ministering together again, they felt fulfillment and joy. Apologies and

forgiveness appear many times in the letters between James and Ellen, and words of joy when they were working together. And when they had to travel in different directions or be separated because by circumstances other than disagreement, they expressed their care and attention to each other through affective words.

## Conclusions

This section presents four significant contributions of this study: the dominant meaning of the marriage; the greatest barriers or threats to the marriage; the main promoting factors that gave strength to the marriage; and the overall trajectory of the marriage to its end.

### The Dominant Meaning of the Marriage

A major finding of the study (documented in chapter 6) is the clear evidence that the dominant meaning of the Whites's marriage was not romantic or sentimental love. Though the Whites's relationship had some common features of nineteenth-century marriages, it did not fit the sentimental romanticism of the time. The meanings present in the Whites's letters did not emphasize love expressed as passion and eroticism. However, this lack of romanticism in no way suggests a lack of deep genuine love, mutual appreciation, respect, and affection. The data show lifelong marital fidelity and no complaints of a sexual nature or conflicts in other areas of life together that would indicate dysfunctionality in their relationship. Their correspondence never suggested a marriage that survived because of convenience or became a formality maintained only in appearance.

While their love was genuine and deep, rather than sentimental, the data point to a pair who found their *raison d'être* as individuals and as a married couple in the mission of proclaiming the Advent message. Even before they were married, they individually felt called to serve God, and the marriage united them in a team ministry. They were first united in the mission, and as they worked together, affection and love gradually developed between them. The mission, thus, functioned as the organizational basis and meaning of the marriage of James and Ellen. It follows, therefore, that the “barriers” versus “promoting factors” in the Whites’s marital relationship were more closely connected with their ability to carry out their mission, than with the presence or absence of romantic love.

#### Barriers or Threats to the Marital Unity

Taking the “barriers” first, chapter 6 revealed that the two main factors that produced crisis in their marital relationship were James’s personality, especially as affected by his disease, and (b) Ellen’s “independence.”

The first barrier was that James’s naturally strong and controlling personality was intensified by the succession of strokes into a source of frequent tension and conflict. James’s leadership of the Advent movement was marked by a fervent zeal. He was a natural leader, but his lofty aims led him to demand work from others that sometimes exceeded their ability—or their motivation to invest the time needed to complete the work to his satisfaction. Sometimes this led him to be harsh with his fellow workers. At other times he chose to do the work himself, depriving himself of sleep and breaking down his health. James’s disease was a barrier in the couple’s path, altering their



relationship, prompting actions in search of balance, and otherwise affecting the dynamics of their relationship.

James's breakdown in health caused meaningful losses to both James and Ellen. It caused James a sense of "unsatisfied need" or a state of psychological "hunger," meaning he felt empty because the disease restrained his ability to work and be in control. The hindrance to his work felt like the loss of the mission which was the central meaning of his life. Thus, the couple's attitude toward their work was an ambivalent factor, because normally their work united them, but in excess, it divided them.

Besides facing the fear that James could die or lose his rationality, because of the pressure of excessive labor and the results of several strokes, Ellen also probably confronted a core fear related to disconnection: not being heard or valued, or losing the love and affection of her husband. On the other hand, James, burdened by the limitations imposed by his strokes, presented a core fear of helplessness or feeling controlled, losing power and control of his own life, of no longer being the main helper of his wife, and unable to do what he loved most, being fully involved in the cause of God. These factors led to anger, since anger is a response to a sense of danger or fear of loss.

James's behavior aggravated a behavior-illness-behavior cycle, gradually creating tension in the marriage group. Thus, the Whites lived through a crisis that went beyond the purely medical explanation. However, James and Ellen, as individuals and as a couple, maintained the core facets of their religion and marital relationship, controlling and reducing the level of tension, in search of stability and underlying functionality in the relationship. Their beliefs and religious experience helped their personal relationship.

The other identified barrier was Ellen's "independence." Her independence was never manifested as an attitude of rebellion or lack of respect for her husband, but was an ambivalent element that, in times of crisis, created distance between them. Her freedom to act caused tension in relation to James, but allowed her to calm her own tension and thus move toward reconciliation.

In two moments of intense crisis (first in 1874 and again in 1876), the Whites decided to work in different places, involving not only geographical, but also emotional distance. This type of "distance" can give both parties space to regain emotional equilibrium, but the isolation runs the risk of intensifying, instead of relieving their anxiety. This reaction appears in a few of the Whites's letters. They sometimes mention each other's wrongs, but not in an exaggerated way. A few sentences reveal tension and frustration, but they did not intensify the trouble by repeating it or dwelling on it. When Ellen expressed her frustration in letters to a friend in 1876, she soon regretted criticizing her husband behind his back and asked her friend to burn the letters.

In order to restore harmony in a marital relationship, both spouses need to cooperate and accommodate each other, but one of them usually does more. In the White couple, Ellen appears to have been that one. Both James and Ellen apologized to each other several times and worked out how to be in peace—after all, they shared a joint ministry— but Ellen was more outspoken in this direction. Since there are more extant letters from Ellen, and the evidence suggests that she sent many more letters to James than vice versa, there are more conciliatory words from her.

## Promoting Factors to the Marital Relationship

This research also points to several promoting factors or potential promoting factors of the relationship: (a) their work together, which gave them company, mutual interests, shared achievement and a feeling of teamwork; (b) mutual appreciation, admiration, respect, and affection; (c) a common religious worldview, beliefs, and lifestyle; (d) complementarity, where despite distinctive temperaments, their talents and roles complemented each other in marriage and mission; (e) the agreement of James to the ideals of the couple and his repentance with a humble and conciliatory attitude; and (f) Ellen's personality, in which submission, humility, affection, concern for James, and an attitude of reconciliation, functioned as a consistently conciliatory element of the relationship.

The data show Ellen to be very human, sensitive, in fragile health, who suffered in the absence of her husband, felt distressed with her husband's suffering, was exhausted by caring for her husband, looked for a shoulder to unburden herself, and repented when she hurt someone close to her or exposed herself too much. It was natural that her situation would produce moments of discouragement. Her lifestyle included physically demanding travel, writing extensively for publication, speaking to large auditoriums of people and being exposed to the personal problems of many. As a woman who had not been trained academically for this work, who clearly knew her limitations and needed help editing and correcting, it was to be expected that she would experience anxiety and moments of "soft" depression (a kind of sadness, but not an anomaly to be cured by medicine, psychological treatment, etc.). It is one more aspect of her humanity. As one of the co-founders of the Seventh-day Adventist movement, Ellen carried a lot of burdens

and challenges on her shoulders, such as worries about the church, its institutions, and people's salvation. It is more than natural that she had a certain level of anxiety and sporadic depression, but she never succumbed completely to it, but faced her circumstances and did what was necessary to overcome them.

### The Trajectory and Functionality of the Marriage

A primary purpose of the study was to discover whether the trajectory of the marriage of James and Ellen White shows the functionality of the relationship along the marital career to the end. This contributes a solid answer to the question of whether their marriage deteriorated in their later years.

Neither James nor Ellen ever implied in any way that their marriage had been a mistake. They had problems, as almost all couples do, but they never raised the possibility of divorce, legal separation, or otherwise leaving each other permanently. On the contrary, their last days together were days of affinity, support, and love. The words penned by James in his last months proved that he considered himself a happy man in his life with Ellen, and Ellen had positive words about James even years after his death. They completed each other, and the separation by death was difficult for Ellen.

Chapter 6 documented widely recognized research showing that six major distinguishing qualities of strong families are: commitment to each other, time spent together, effective communication, expressions of appreciation for each other, spiritual commitment, and the ability to solve problems in a crisis. All of these qualities can be identified in the marriage of James and Ellen White. Thus, it can be concluded that despite the difficulties inherent in their marriage, and marital conflicts in some phases of their career, the Whites were a functional pair. They had their share of disagreements, but

the trajectory of the couple shows the functionality of their relationship to the end. Conflicts are normal in human relationships, and they managed them in ways that did not affect the central aspects of their marriage. They were consistent in their values, beliefs, and ideals, and throughout their relationship they adopted strategies that enabled them to stay united and fulfill the purpose they believed God had given them. They were a couple that fought the good fight as best they could.

#### Suggestions for Further Research

1. Besides Lewin, from which this dissertation drew major concepts, another leading theorist was Murray Bowen (1913–1990), a psychiatrist and one of the pioneers of family therapy. He founded the Georgetown Family Center in 1975, and was the Director of the Family Center until his death.<sup>1</sup> It could be profitable to study the Whites' relationship from the viewpoint of the Bowen Family Systems Theory, especially as interpreted through the lenses of one of Murray Bowen's students, Roberta Gilbert.<sup>2</sup>
2. It would be interesting to have a psychologist or sociologist skilled in family systems theory, process the historical and documentary data about the Whites' relationship from their own professional perspective, and see if they come up with similar overall conclusions.

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<sup>1</sup> See Murray Bowen, The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, online at <https://www.thebowncenter.org>, accessed June 7, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships*.

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Many of the materials used for this dissertation came from unpublished sources housed in the Center for Adventist Research archives. This note provides a brief description of the holdings of this collection, and follows with a list of unpublished dissertation, theses, and research papers. The primary and secondary published materials are listed in the regular way following the note.

Center for Adventist Research  
James White Library  
Andrews University  
Berrien Springs,  
Michigan

The Center for Adventist Research (CAR) at Andrews University was the main location for the research of this study. The CAR serves as a branch office of the Ellen G. White Estate and as an archive for Adventist historical material. It contains a great bulk of material related to the history of Adventism especially Seventh-day Adventism, such as, dissertations, research papers, correspondences, collections, and files of historical documents. The basic primary sources used in this research were Ellen White's unpublished letters and manuscripts files, and the following Document Files (DF), numbered according to the catalog of the CAR, include the letters of James White: "James and Ellen White Letters, 1846–1855," DF 1; "James White, Letters from Relatives," DF 715; "James White Letters, 1845–1881," DF 718-a. Their letter files contain several correspondences sent to one another, and hundreds of other letters sent to

others, which includes important information about the Whites. Ellen White's manuscript files consist of her diaries, sermons, and documents pertinent to a broader perspective of the relationship between the Whites. Other documents used were, Otis Nichols, "Statement by Otis Nichols," n.d., 1; DF 105; and D. E. Robinson, "Meeting Early Apostasies," DF 349-a.

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