

"From Vision to Printed Page"

I. GENERAL TYPES OF VISIONS

A. Visions given in public, and accompanied by marked physical phenomena. This type lasted from a few minutes up to, on one occasion, more than four hours.

Description by Martha D. Amadon, circa 1925.

As one who has frequently observed her in vision, knowing the company of people usually present, all deeply observant and believers in her exercises, I have often wondered why a more vivid description of the scenes which transpired has not been given.

In vision her eyes were open. There was no breath, but there were graceful movements of the shoulders, arms, and hands expressive of what she saw. It was impossible for anyone else to move her hands or arms. She often uttered words singly, and sometimes sentences which expressed to those about her the nature of the view she was having, either of heaven or of earth.

Her first word in vision was "Glory," sounding at first close by, and then dying away in the distance, seemingly far away. This was sometimes repeated. When beholding Jesus our Saviour, she would exclaim in musical tones, low and sweet, "Lovely, lovely, lovely," many times, always with the greatest affection. Looking upon the cloud which enveloped the Father, as she afterward explained, her shoulders would draw back, her hands lifted in awe, and her lips would close.

Sometimes she would cross her lips with her finger, meaning that she was not at that time to reveal what she saw, but later a message would perhaps go across the continent to save some individual or church from disaster. She said, "Words cannot express the beauties of heaven," no more can they describe these scenes of which she was a part. Her visions seemed to bring you nearer heaven, and you longed to be there.

There was never an excitement among those present during a vision; nothing caused fear. It was a solemn, quiet scene, sometimes lasting an hour,—a scene, during which, like prophets of old, she saw so much of the vastness of God's work for His people, that it would be the principal subject of her writing for two or more years. When the vision was ended, and she lost sight of the heavenly light, as it were, coming back to the earth once more, she would exclaim with a long drawn sigh, as she took her first natural breath, "D-a-r-k." She was then limp and strengthless, and had to be assisted to her chair, her position in vision being a recumbent one.—*Mrs. E. G. White in Vision*, p. 1.

Description by J. N. Loughborough, written in 1892.

The first time I saw Mrs. E. G. White (formerly Miss Harmon) was on the first Sabbath in October, 1852. On that day I saw her in a vision that lasted over one hour. Since that time I have had the privilege of seeing her in vision about fifty times. I have been present when physicians have examined her while in this state, and I esteem it a pleasure to bear testimony

to what I have seen and know. I trust a narration of the facts in the case may not be carelessly cast aside for the random suppositions of those who have never seen her in this condition.

In passing into vision she gives three enrapturing shouts of "Glory!" The second, and especially the third, fainter, but more thrilling than the first, the voice resembling that of one quite a distance from you, and just going out of hearing. For about four or five seconds she seems to drop down like a person in a swoon or one having lost his strength; she then seems to be instantly filled with super-human strength, sometimes rising at once to her feet and walking about the room. There are frequent movements of the hands and arms, pointing to the right or left as her head turns. All these movements are made in a most graceful manner. In whatever position the hand or arm may be placed, it is impossible for anyone to move it. Her eyes are always open, but she does not wink; her head is raised, and she is looking upward, not with a vacant stare, but with a pleasant expression, only differing from the normal in that she appears to be looking intently at some distant object. She does not breathe, yet her pulse beats regularly. Her countenance is pleasant, and the color of her face as florid as in her natural state.—J. N. Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists*, pp. 93, 94.

Example of superhuman strength, written in 1892

In October of [1862]. . . , Moses Hull, who was considered a good debater, held a discussion in Paw Paw, Mich., with a noted Spiritualist by the name of Jamieson. At that time Mr. Hull partially fell under the influence of this satanic delusion. The following month, November 5, several persons assembled at my home in Battle Creek, for the purpose of having conversation with him. At the close of the interview, we had a praying season; and while in a kneeling position, Mrs. White was taken off in vision. Some of the things she saw at this time are recorded in "Testimony for the Church," No. 10 [now Volume 1]. The manifestation of superhuman strength as shown on her part is the principle reason for calling attention to this vision. Mr. Daigneau, whose home was next door to mine, had never before seen her in this condition, and so used many tests whereby he satisfied himself that she did not breathe during this time, and that she knew nothing of what was transpiring around her; also that she was controlled by some power far superior to her own.

Mr. Daigneau was a strong man. His business, being that of a stone mason, necessitated the daily lifting of large stones. While in this vision, Mrs. White would clasp her hands together upon her chest with the fingers upon the back of the hand, and he could not by the utmost exertion raise one finger sufficiently to get his thumb and finger between her finger and hand. Almost the next moment her hands were unclasped, and her hand and arm were moving gracefully toward the object she seemed to be viewing.

While her arm was thus extended, Elder White said, "Brother Daigneau, that looks like an easy motion, and as though you, a strong man, could easily bend her arm. You can try if you wish." He then placed his knee in the bend of the elbow of her arm, and taking hold of the extended hand with both his hands, pulled backward with all his might, without bending it in the least. Said he, "I would as soon to undertake to bend

an iron bar as that arm.” Before he had fairly closed the sentence, the arm passed gracefully back to her chest, but with a force that slid his feet on the floor while trying to resist the pressure brought to bear against him. He at once admitted that there was superhuman strength connected with the vision; for he well knew Mrs. White’s natural condition was that of weakness, as she was a woman of delicate health.—J. N. Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*, 246-248.

Description by James White, written in 1868.

1. She is utterly unconscious of everything transpiring around her, as has been proved by the most rigid tests, but views herself as removed from this world, and in the presence of heavenly beings.
2. She does not breathe. During the entire period of her continuance in vision, which has at different times ranged from fifteen minutes to three hours, there is no breath, as has been repeatedly proved by pressing upon the chest, and by closing the mouth and nostrils.
3. Immediately on entering vision, her muscles become rigid, and joints fixed, so far as any external force can influence them. At the same time her movements and gestures, which are frequent, are free and graceful, and cannot be hindered nor controlled by the strongest person.
4. On coming out of vision, whether in the day-time or a well-lighted room at night, all is total darkness. Her power to distinguish even the most brilliant objects, held within a few inches of the eyes, returns, but gradually, sometimes not being fully established for three hours. This has continued for the past twenty years; yet her eyesight is not in the least impaired, few persons having better than she now possesses.—*Life Incidents*, p. 272.

For those interested in reading additional accounts written by individuals who witnessed Ellen White in vision, see J. N. Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*, 1892, pp. 93-98; Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement*, 1905, pp. 204-211; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant*, 1969 ed., pp. 22-25; *Spirit of Prophecy Treasure Chest*, pp. 24, 25. These last two sources draw largely from Loughborough’s second book just cited.

Summary.

From the many eyewitness accounts available we build the following summary:*

1. Immediately preceding a vision, there was a deep sensing of the presence of God both by Mrs. White and by others in the room.
2. As the vision began, Mrs. White uttered an exclamation of “Glory!” or “Glory to God!” at times repeated.
3. There was a loss of physical strength.
4. Supernatural strength was then apparent.
5. There was no breathing, but the heartbeat continued normally, and the color in the cheeks was natural. The most critical tests failed to reveal any disturbance of the circulation system.
6. Occasionally there would be exclamations of the scene being presented.
7. The eyes were open, not with a vacant stare, but as if she were intently watching something.
8. The position might vary. At times she was seated; at times reclining; at times she walked about the room and made graceful gestures as she spoke of matters presented.
9. There was an absolute unconsciousness of what was occurring about her. She neither saw, heard, felt, nor perceived in any way the immediate surroundings or happenings.
10. The close of the vision was indicated by a deep inhalation, followed in about a minute by another, and very soon natural breathing was resumed.
11. Immediately after the vision all seemed very dark.
12. Within a short time natural strength and abilities were regained.

*NOTE—For reference to statements from the Scripture record in which mention is made of visions accompanied by similar phenomena, see Dan. 10:7-10, 16-19; Num. 24:3, 4, 16.

Ellen White’s description of her first vision.

Portion of a sermon given by Ellen G. White at a meeting held in Australia in the North Brighton Town Hall on Sunday afternoon, February 25, 1894, in which she recounted some details surrounding her first vision.

They thought that I was dead, and there they watched and cried and prayed so long, but to me it was heaven, it was life. . . .

I never thought that I should come to the world again. When my breath came again to my body, I could not hear anything. Everything was dark. The light and glory that my eyes had rested upon had eclipsed the light and thus it was for many hours. Then gradually I began to recognize the light, and I asked where I was.

“You are right here in my house,” said the owner of the house [Elizabeth Haines].

“What, here? I here? Do you not know about it?” Then it all came back to me. Is this to be my home? Have I come here again? Oh, the weight and the burden which came upon my soul.— *Manuscript 16*, 1894.

Visions never Impaired Ellen White’s health.

The experience of the visions never weakened or debilitated Mrs. White. They were usually followed by increased natural strength and improved health.—Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant*, pp. 6, 7.

In fact, one only needs to read *Life Sketches* to realize that often Ellen White was healed while in vision.

Why were the physical phenomena necessary?

It’s interesting that the pioneers never used the physical phenomena to prove Ellen White’s inspiration. They always pointed to them only as evidence that God was working in her experience. At the beginning of her work there were no “fruits” to judge her by—either spoken or written. This was one evidence to substantiate her claim that God was with her. The physical phenomena were not proof that she was inspired, but they were an evidence.

Ellen White’s last open vision was given her either in 1879 or 1884. A discussion of the evidence is found in *A Critique of Prophetess of Health*, p. 85.

B. Visions given during the hours of the night, often referred to as prophetic dreams.

In the Ellen G. White writings, expressions of this character are frequent: “In the visions of the night some things were clearly presented before me;” or, “In the night season the Lord gave me instruction.” All through her experience, and more particularly in the later years of her life, the visions were frequently given during the hours of the night, while the mind was at rest and entirely severed from circumstances and influences about her. Questions may arise concerning the relationship between a prophetic dream, or night vision, and an ordinary dream. Of this Mrs. White wrote in 1868:

There are many dreams arising from the common things of life, with which the Spirit of God has nothing to do. There are also false dreams, as well as false visions, which are inspired by the spirit of Satan. But dreams from the Lord are classed in the word of God with visions and are as truly the fruits of the spirit of prophecy as visions. Such dreams, taking into the account the persons who have them, and the circumstances under

which they are given, contain their own proofs of their genuineness.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 658.

At one time Mrs. White's son, W. C. White, made this inquiry of her: "Mother, you often speak of matters being revealed to you in the night season. You speak of dreams in which light comes to you. We all have dreams. How do you know that God is speaking to you in the dreams of which you so frequently speak?"

"Because," she answered, "the same angel messenger stands by my side instructing me in the visions of the night, as stands beside me instructing me in the visions of the day." The heavenly being referred to was at other times spoken of as "the angel," "my guide," "my instructor," "the young man," et cetera.

Thus we can see clearly that there was no confusion in the prophet's mind, no question as to the revelation which came during the hours of the night while the mind was at rest; for the very circumstances in connection with it made it clear that it was instruction from God.—*Spirit of Prophecy Treasure Chest*, p. 21.

C. Visions given during periods of prayer or writing, unaccompanied by physical phenomena.

While the two types of visions already mentioned were the most common in the experience of Mrs. White, the revelations to her were by no means limited to these two. Not infrequently visions unaccompanied by physical phenomena were given while she was writing, speaking, or praying, either in private or in public. The following is one such example:

While praying, Ellen White sensed "a soft light circling around in the room, and a fragrance like the fragrance of flowers, of a beautiful scent of flowers."—*Ms 43a*, 1901.

Later, recounting that Friday night season of prayer, Ellen White stated, "Though none of the family saw what I saw, or heard what I heard, yet they felt the influence of the Spirit, and were weeping and praising God."—*General Conference Bulletin*, 1901, p. 204.

At such times the immediate surroundings seemed to be shut out while matters were presented to her in revelation. One outstanding instance of this character was in connection with the Minnesota camp meeting of 1870. W. C. White, who was present, gives the following account:

Father and mother were carrying a heavy burden in behalf of the ministry who had been working in the State. On Sunday morning they undertook to conduct a revival service. Father spoke for a few minutes, but with little freedom. Then after mother had spoken briefly, they asked the congregation to kneel in prayer. Father offered a labored,

sorrowful prayer, then mother began to implore for light and freedom. After she had prayed for about two minutes she stopped. There was silence long enough to count to forty or fifty, about half a minute.

I was kneeling with the congregation, and I turned to see what was the occasion for the silence. Just then she burst forth in prayer. Her voice was melodious, and triumphant, and the remainder of her prayer greatly moved the people present.

During that period of silence, a revelation was given her regarding conditions in the Minnesota Conference, also conditions regarding the work in Battle Creek, also regarding other matters of general interest in the cause. Following the camp meeting, father and mother found retirement at the home of one of our brethren. Mother wrote diligently for about two weeks, in recording what had been shown to her during the half minute of pause in her prayer.—W. C. White in "Lecture at Advanced Bible School," 1936, White Estate Document File, no. 514.

The fact that God could communicate so much information in such a short length of time used to be difficult to understand. However, with the advent of the internet, and the great speed with which large amounts of information can now be downloaded in a split second, what God can do is much easier to comprehend.

References to visions during prayer are quite common in the E.G. White writings. Here is a typical one.

While engaged in earnest prayer, I was lost to everything around me; the room was filled with light, and I was bearing a message to an assembly that seemed to be the General Conference.—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 461.

It is clear that the mind of the prophet, during vision, must be entirely freed from surrounding circumstances or influences. It was of little consequence whether this was accomplished through the loss of ordinary consciousness during the hours of wakefulness, or whether the revelations were given during the hours of the night when the mind was free and at rest. In either case God spoke, the mind was enlightened, the agent was entrusted with important messages to communicate to the church and the world. The varying circumstances of the visions created no degrees of quality of the revelations imparted.—*Spirit of Prophecy Treasure Chest*, pp. 21, 22.

II. CONTENT OF VISIONS.

The content of the visions was given in two ways: through pictures as though the prophet actually witnessed the event and through symbols.

God Himself employed pictures and symbols to represent to His prophets lessons which He would have them give to the people, and which could thus be better understood than if given in any other way. He appealed to the understanding through the sense of sight. Prophetic history

was presented to Daniel and John in symbols, and these were to be represented plainly upon tables, that he who reads might understand.—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, pp. 319, 320.

A. Through actual view of the event as though witnessed personally.

Ellen White's description of vision given to Moses on Mt. Nebo.

And now a panoramic view of the Land of Promise was presented to him. Every part of the country was spread out before him, not faint and uncertain in the dim distance, but standing out clear, distinct, and beautiful to his delighted vision. In this scene it was presented, not as it then appeared, but as it would become, with God's blessing upon it, in the possession of Israel. He seemed to be looking upon a second Eden. There were mountains clothed with cedars of Lebanon, hills gray with olives and fragrant with the odor of the vine, wide green plains bright with flowers and rich in fruitfulness, here the palm trees of the tropics, there waving fields of wheat and barley, sunny valley's musical with the ripple of brooks and the song of birds, goodly cities and fair gardens, lakes rich in "the abundance of the seas," grazing flocks upon the hillsides, and even amid the rocks the wild bee's hoarded treasures.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 472.

Ellen White's description of her own first vision given in December, 1844.

[It should be remembered that what is printed in *Spiritual Gifts*, bk. 2, as Ellen White's first vision took the 17-year-old Ellen Harmon two hours to relate when she visited Poland, Maine, in January, 1845. Consequently, what we have today in her written account is only the barest outline of her first vision.]

While I was praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above the dark world. I turned to look for the Advent people in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me, "Look again, and look a little higher." At this I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were traveling to the city, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind them at the beginning of the path, which an angel told me was the midnight cry. This light shone all along the path and gave light for their feet so that they might not stumble . . .

His hair was white and curly and lay on His shoulders', and upon His head were many crowns. His feet had the appearance of fire; in His right hand was a sharp sickle; in His left, a silver trumpet. His eyes were as a flame of fire, which searched His children through and through. Then all faces gathered paleness, and those that God had rejected gathered blackness. Then we all cried out, "Who shall be able to stand? Is my robe spotless?" Then the angels ceased to sing, and there was some time of awful silence, when Jesus spoke: "Those who have clean hands and pure hearts shall be able to stand; My grace is sufficient for you." At this our faces lighted up, and joy filled every heart. And the angels struck a note higher and sang again, while the cloud drew still nearer the earth.

Then Jesus' silver trumpet sounded, as He descended on the cloud, wrapped in flames of fire. He gazed on the graves of the sleeping saints, then raised His eyes and hands to heaven, and cried, "Awake! awake! awake! ye that sleep in the dust, and arise." Then there was a mighty earthquake. The graves opened, and the dead came up clothed with immortality. . . .—*Early Writings*, pp. 14, 16.

In a subsequent vision given in early 1845 she was shown.

I saw another field full of all kinds of flowers, and as I plucked them, I cried out, "they will never fade." Next I saw a field of tall grass, most glorious to behold; it was living green and had a reflection of silver and gold, as it waved proudly to the glory of King Jesus. . . . He said, "You must go back to the earth again and relate to others what I have revealed to you." Then an angel bore me gently down to this dark world. Sometimes I think I can stay here no longer; all things of earth look so dreary. I feel very lonely here, for I have seen a better land. Oh, that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest!—*Early Writings*, pp. 18, 20.

In vision Ellen White sang with the angelic choir.

1850 vision: Then I was pointed to the glory of heaven, to the treasure laid up for the faithful. Everything was lovely and glorious. The angels would sing a lovely song, then they would cease singing and take their crowns from their heads and cast them glittering at the feet of the lovely Jesus, and with melodious voices cry, 'Glory, Alleluia!' I joined with them in their songs of praise and honor to the Lamb, and every time I opened my mouth to praise Him, I felt an unutterable sense of the glory that surrounded me. It was a far more, an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Said the angel, 'The little remnant who love God and keep His commandments and are faithful to the end will enjoy this glory and ever be in the presence of Jesus and sing with the holy angels.'—*Early Writings*, p. 66.

View of personal indiscretions shown Ellen White in vision.

While in Europe the things that transpired in _____ were opened before me. A voice said, "Follow me, and I will show you the sins that are practiced by those who stand in responsible positions." I went through the rooms, and I saw you, a watchman upon the walls of Zion, were very intimate with another man's wife, betraying sacred trusts, crucifying your Lord afresh. Did you consider that there was a Watcher, the Holy One, who was witnessing your evil work? She was sitting on your lap; you were kissing her, and she was kissing you. Other scenes of fondness, sensual look and deportment, were presented before me, which send a thrill of horror through my soul. Your arms encircled her waist, and the fondness expressed was having a bewitching influence. Then a curtain was lifted, and I was shown you in bed with [Sister N.]. My Guide said, "Iniquity, adultery."—*Letter 16*, 1888.

B. Symbolic representations.

In Bible times.

Two months after Haggai's last recorded message was delivered, Zechariah had a series of visions regarding the work of God on the earth. These messages, given in the form of parables and symbols, came at a time of great uncertainty and anxiety, and were of peculiar significance to the men who were advancing in the name of the God of Israel—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 580.

In Ellen White's experience.

Sometimes important lessons were shown Ellen White through parablelike or symbolic representations. One striking example is found in *Gospel Workers*, pages 136-139, where in a dream she saw a berry-gathering expedition. Some people could find many berries, while others located few or none. Some tired quickly when gathering their fruit, while in her dream, Mrs. White kept looking for and finding more and more berries. The entire dream represented the various ways people go about their soul-winning efforts.

Years earlier, the proper length of the Health Reform Dress provides another example of a symbolic representation vision. Given below is Ellen White's description of what she was actually shown in relation to the proper length for the Health Reform Dress. In *Testimony*, no. 10, (1863), she had said it should clear the filth of the street an inch or two. In *Testimony*, no. 11, (1867), she had said it should reach somewhat below the top of a lady's gaiter boot. This difference caused some to question what she had actually seen in vision.

The proper distance from the bottom of the dress to the floor was not given to me in inches. Neither was I shown ladies' gaiter boots; but three companies of females passed before me, with their dresses as follows with respect to length.

The first were of fashionable length, burdening the limbs, impeding the step, and sweeping the street and gathering its filth; the evil results of which I have fully stated. This class, who were slaves to fashion, appeared feeble and languid.

The dress of the second class which passed before me was in many respects as it should be. The limbs were well clad. They were free from the burdens which the tyrant, Fashion, had imposed upon the first class; but had gone to that extreme in the short dress as to disgust and prejudice good people, and destroy in a great measure their own influence. This is the style and influence of the "American Costume," taught and worn by many at "Our Home," Dansville, N.Y. It does not reach to the knee. I need not say that this style of dress was shown me to be too short.

A third class passed before me with cheerful countenances, and free, elastic step. Their dress was the length I have described as proper, modest and healthful. It cleared the filth of the street and side-walk a few inches under all circumstances, such as ascending and descending steps, etc.

As I have before stated, the length was not given me in inches, and I was not shown a lady's boot. And here I would state that although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation.* As I wrote upon the subject of dress the view of those three companies revived in my mind as plain as when I was viewing them in vision; but I was left to describe the length of the proper dress in my own language the best I could which I have done by stating that the bottom of the dress should reach near the top of a lady's boot, which would be necessary in order to clear the filth of the streets under the circumstances before named.—*Review and Herald*, October 8, 1867, p. 260.

*Here she is making a distinction between exact words divinely spoken and her words used in conveying the message of the vision. The distinction is between divine words and her words, not between her words and the words of other human beings that she, at times, used in bringing precision and historical color to her writings.—Herbert Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, pp. 173, 174.

C. Ellen White's two sons discuss how the content of the visions was given to their mother.

Norfolk Villa, Granville, September 30, 1895

J. E. White,

My dear brother,—

... Edson, you know we have been often perplexed because the matters revealed to Mother did not always come in direct language, thus saith the Lord. We have wondered why that important matters were presented to her in figures, and that she was left to struggle with the difficulty of knowing how to present them. Well, I have been thinking more of this lately, and I thank God for His mercy, because as I see how horrible sin and selfishness are in His sight, as I see how these things weigh on mother's heart and mind, I am led to believe that if God should present to her the truths that He reveals in the harsh, bungling manner in which we would do it, that the burden would kill mother. I find that there is more for me to learn, and I pray for a humble heart and a teachable spirit, and for faith and courage, that I may know how to help mother, and not be a burden to her. . . .

Your brother,

(W. C. White)

III. HOW INSPIRATION WORKED IN ELLEN WHITE'S EXPERIENCE.

A. Ellen White's personal description of what it was like to have a vision.

Ellen White states that she was as dependent upon relating or writing the vision as in receiving it. If God did not help her to remember it afterwards, she could not even recall the vision.

As inquiries are frequently made as to my state in vision, and after I come out, I would say that when the Lord sees fit to give a vision, I am taken into the presence of JESUS and angels, and am entirely lost to earthly things, I can see no farther than the angel directs me. My attention is often directed to scenes transpiring upon earth.

At times I am carried far ahead into the future and shown what is to take place. Then again I am shown things as they have occurred in the past.* After I come out of vision I do not at once remember all that I have seen, and the matter is not so clear before me until I write, then the scene rises before me as was presented in vision, and I can write with freedom. Sometimes the things which I have seen are hid from me after I come out of vision, and I cannot call them to mind until I am brought before a company where that vision applies, then the things which I have seen come to my mind with force. I am just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision, as in having the vision. It is impossible for me to call up things which have been shown me unless the Lord brings them before me at the time that he is pleased to have me relate or write them.**—*Spiritual Gifts*, bk. 2, pp. 292-293; reprinted in *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, pp. 36-37.

*I have been urged by the Spirit of the Lord to fully warn our people in regard to undue familiarity of married men with women, and women with men. This lovesick sentimentalism existed in the [city] mission at _____ before you were connected with it. I was shown you with others manifesting the same; whether this is in the past or the future I cannot say; for often things are presented to me long before the circumstances take place.—*Letter 17*, 1891 (*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, pp. 54, 55.)

**On one occasion when we were talking together about your experience in your work, you asked me, "Have you told me all?" I could not say more at that time. Often representations are given me which at first I do not understand, but after a time they are made plain by a repeated presentations of those things that I did not at first comprehend, and in ways that make their meaning clear and unmistakable.—*Letter 329*, 1904 (*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 56) [Written to a lady physician who was planning to marry a man who already had children.]

**Some things I can not present in distinct lines, but enough is clear to me that I want you to be very careful on what ground you tread.—*Letter 44*, 1893 [Written from New Zealand to A. T. Jones regarding religious liberty issues.]

B. Ellen White's understanding of how inspiration operates in a prophet's experience. The prophet is inspired with thoughts—not generally propositions.

The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. *God, as a writer, is not represented.* Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. *The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen.* Look at the different writers.

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 21. (Emphasis supplied).

C. At the time of the proposed re-issuing of the *Testimonies of the Church* in 1883, the General Conference endorsed the concept of “thought” inspiration.

Whereas, We believe the light given by God to His servants is by the enlightenment of the mind, thus imparting the thoughts, and not (except in rare cases) the very words in which the ideas should be expressed; therefore—

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

Resolved, That this body appoint a committee of five to take charge of the republication of these volumes.—*Review and Herald*, November 27, 1883, p. 741.

D. Ellen White understood her inspiration to be “thought” inspiration.

I try to put the thoughts into such simple language that a child can understand every word uttered.—Ellen G. White, *Letter* 61a, 1900.

IV. THE WRITING OUT OF THE VISIONS.

A. Ellen White felt her lack of literary ability.

EGW manuscript entitled “DIARY,” dated January 1 to 31, 1873.

We rose early to prepare to go to San Francisco. My heart is inexpressibly sad. This morning I take into candid consideration my writings. My husband is too feeble to help me prepare them for the printer, therefore I shall do no more with them at present. I am not a

scholar. I cannot prepare my own writings for the press. Until I can do this I shall write no more. It is not my duty to tax others with my manuscript. . . .

I am thinking I must lay aside my writing I have taken so much pleasure in, and see if I cannot become a scholar. I am not a grammarian. I will try if the Lord will help me at forty-five years old to become a scholar in the science.—*Manuscript 3*, 1873, p. 5.

EGW letter to Elder O. A. Olsen dated July 15, 1892.

Oh, how inefficient, how incapable I am of expressing the things which burn in my soul in reference to the mission of Christ. . . . I know not how to speak or trace with pen the large subject of the atoning sacrifice. I know not how to present subjects in the living power in which they stand before me. I tremble for fear lest I shall belittle the great plan of salvation by cheap words.—*Letter 40*, 1892.

EGW letter to Brother and Sister Prescott dated January 18, 1894.

I am but a poor writer, and cannot with pen or voice express the great and deep mysteries of God.—*Letter 67*, 1894.

EGW manuscript entitled “Illustrations of Heavenly Things.”

My words seem inadequate. I despair of clothing the truth God has made known concerning His great redemption, which engrossed to itself His undivided attention in the only begotten Son of the Infinite One. The truths that are to last through time and through eternity, the great plan of redemption, which cost so much for the salvation of the human race, presenting before them a life that measures with the life of God—these truths are too full, deep, and holy for human words or human pen to adequately express.— *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 118.

B. Ellen White was an effective communicator in her own right.

Something of her ability to express herself can be learned from a report appearing in the *Battle Creek Journal* of October 5, 1887. The occasion was a temperance lecture she presented to the residents of her former home town shortly after her return from a two-year stay in Europe. The reporter stated:

This lady gave her audience a most eloquent discourse which was listened to with marked interest and attention. Her talk was interspersed with instructive facts which she had gathered in her recent visit to foreign lands, and demonstrated that this gifted lady has, in addition to her many other rare qualifications, a great faculty for attentive, careful observation, and a remarkable memory of details. This, together with her fine delivery and her faculty of clothing her ideas in choice, beautiful, and appropriate language, made her lecture one of the best that has ever been delivered by any lady in our city. That she may soon favor our community with another address, is the earnest wish of all who attended last evening; and should she do so, there will be a large attendance.—Quoted in the *Review and Herald*, October 11, 1887, p. 640.

Report of Ellen White's first description of "Great Controversy" vision in the Second Meeting House in Battle Creek, Michigan, Sunday, May 23, 1858.

[The "Great Controversy" vision had been given to Ellen White during a funeral at Lovett's Grove, Ohio, on Sunday afternoon, March 14, 1848. The published form of the vision was the 219-page *Spiritual Gifts*, bk. 1, that came out in September, 1858.]

Social meeting resumed with unabated vigor on First-day morning at 8 o'clock. During the forenoon, sister White related a portion of the views she has had concerning the fall of Satan, the plan of salvation, and the great controversy between Christ and his angels, and Satan and his. It abounded in startling facts and vivid descriptions. And when the course of the narration had brought us down to the days of the first advent, the humiliation, the suffering and finally the crucifixion of the Savior, especially then did not only the silent tear, but even the audible sobs of many in the congregation, announce that their hearts were touched by the suffering of the Son of God for rebellious man. When we view this great controversy as is now going forward - its field the world, its subject man - we see not how any one can long hesitate upon which side to enroll himself. And at least the justice of that sentence is very apparent, which condemns those who will persist to the end on the side of the power of darkness, to the same ruin which overwhelms the first rebel and his unworthy sympathizers.

At 2 o'clock P. M., we repaired to the river-side where thirteen willing souls rejoiced in a burial with Christ by baptism. Discourse at 3, by Bro. Cornell. In the evening, after remarks by Bro. Sperry, sister White resumed and continued narration till nearly 10. There was then such a crowding in of testimonies, that not till after five ineffectual attempts did Bro. White succeed in closing the meeting. He told the congregation at length, that if they would suffer him a few remarks, he would then give them all an opportunity to express their feelings. He did so by requesting all those who were determined to press onward to Mt. Zion, to manifest it by rising. The whole congregation were on their feet with a bound; and thus, at about the hour of eleven, closed the religious exercises of the Conference.—*Review and Herald*, May 27, 1858, p. 13.

Conclusions drawn by Fred Veltman at the end of his seven year [1981-1988] *Desire of Ages* research project.

Even though at times she [Ellen G. White] recognized her lack of education and literary ability and depended to a great extent on her literary assistants, it is clear from her diaries that she could write and knew how to express her thoughts. Though she was not strong physically and had only minimal formal education, she was a person of great natural intelligence and through the years became widely read. Also she was a speaker of some renown. . . .

This is not to say that at times she did not have great difficulty expressing herself. There are some passages in her original handwritten manuscripts which defy one's best efforts to understand. Other portions are poorly composed. But typically, her writings are readable

and easily understood. . . . Having read most of her handwritten materials, I feel sure that anyone aware of Ellen White's limited formal education would be surprised at the high level of readability, the clarity, and the literary force her original writings exhibit.—Fred Veltman, *Life of Christ Research Project*, pp. 926, 927.

C. Mrs. White's use of literary assistants.

Mrs. White's assistants recognized that she was the author of her own books.

Marian Davis regarded her contribution to *The Desire of Ages* to be strictly that of an editor. When C. H. Jones, manager of the Pacific Press, urged that the manuscript be completed immediately, Marian wrote W. C. White:

Sister White is constantly harassed with the thought that the manuscript should be sent to the printers at once. I wish it were possible to relieve her mind, for the anxiety makes it hard for her to write and for me to work. . . . Sister White seems inclined to write, and I have no doubt she will bring out many precious things. I hope it will be possible to get them into the book. There is one thing, however, that not even the most competent editor could do—that is prepare the manuscript before it is written.—August 9, 1897, White Estate Received Correspondence File. Quoted in R. W. Olson, *101 Questions*, p. 100.

A statement by Marian Davis.

“Sunnyside”, Cooranbong,
April 23, 1900

Elder G. A. Irwin,

Dear Brother:

A report in circulation in Battle Creek has just come to my notice. Lest through this report any should be led to reject the instruction and warning of the Spirit of God, I feel it a duty to say what I know in regard to the matter in question.

It is reported that the writing of a testimony for a prominent man in Battle Creek [A. R. Henry] was intrusted to one of Sister White's former workers [Fannie Bolton], or that she was given matter for him, with instruction to fill out the points, so that the testimony was virtually her work.

I cannot think that anyone who has been connected with Sister White's work could make such a statement as this. I cannot think that anyone who is acquainted with Sister White's manner of writing could possibly believe it. The burden she feels when the case of an individual is presented before her, the intense pressure under which she works, often rising at midnight to write out the warnings given her, and for days, weeks and even months, writing again and again concerning it, as if she could not free herself from the feeling of responsibility for that soul,—no one who has known anything of these experiences, could believe that she could intrust to another the writing of a testimony.*

For more than twenty years I have been connected with Sister White's work. During this time I have never been asked either to write a testimony from oral instruction or fill out the points in matter already written. The one who is reported to have made the statement was never to my knowledge, either asked or permitted to do such a thing. And from my knowledge of the work, as well as the statements of Sister White herself, I have the strongest possible ground for disbelieving that such a thing was done. A word more. Letters were sent to Sister White making inquiries to which, for want of time she cannot write out a reply. These letters have been read to her, and she has given direction as to how they should be answered. The answers have been written out by W. C. White or myself. But Sister White's name was not appended to these letters. The name of the writer was signed, with the words, "For Mrs. E. G. White."

Hoping that this statement may bring relief to some minds, I remain, yours in the work,

(Signed) M. Davis

—Quoted in *The Fannie Bolton Story, A collection of Source Documents*, 1990, pp. 91, 92.

***[Excerpts from a 12-page, double-spaced, typewritten letter to Elder Uriah Smith showing intensity under which Ellen White wrote when burdened for a soul.]**

Battle Creek, Mich.
Wednesday, Dec. 31, 1890

Dear Brother Smith,—

I have been remarkably exercised in regard to your case several times during my last round of labors. I have been greatly blessed of the Lord; but at times your case has been presented before me in a very clear light,—just where you are standing. I have carried the burden with but little hope that I could do you any good. . . .

[p. 3] I am sorry that you are affected with defective spiritual eye-sight. I beg of you, for your soul's sake, to buy of the heavenly merchant man gold that ye may be rich; white raiment that ye may be clothed, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see. . . .

[p. 4] My Brother, Uriah Smith, whom I have loved and respected in the Lord, you have been working at cross purposes with god, practicing upon yourself deceptions which, if you continue as you have done, will be succeeded with deceptions and delusions which will end in irrevocable separation from God. . . .

[p. 6] "Without me," said Christ, "ye can do nothing" Do you refuse to fall on the Rock? If so, there is not the slightest assurance in your case that you will ever recover yourself out of the snare of the devil. . . .

[p. 10] Why your particular case agonizes my soul so continuously I cannot define. Again and again have I seen that blindness was upon you to an alarming degree. I give you up to

the hands of Jesus, and then think I have not more to say, not another word, then I find my soul torn with anguish and I am weeping and praying with strong cryings and tears, Take not thy Holy Spirit from him; O, let something from Thy Spirit break this spell. . . .

[This letter was written in the aftermath of the 1888 “Righteousness by Faith” Minneapolis, Minnesota, General Conference session. And it was this letter that God used to get through to Elder Smith.]]

Statement by Fannie Bolton, made about 1901.

The editors in no wise change Sister White’s expression if it is grammatically correct, and is an evident expression of the evident thought. Sister White as human instrumentality has a pronounced style of her own, which is preserved all through her books and articles that stamps the matter with her individuality. Many times her manuscript does not need any editing, often but slight editing, and again a great deal of literary work; but article or chapter, whatever has been done upon it, is passed back into her hands by the editor, and the Spirit of prophecy then appropriates the matter, and it becomes, when approved, the chosen expression of the Spirit of God.—Fannie Bolton, from *A Confession Concerning the Testimony of Jesus Christ*, addressed to ‘Dear Brethren in the Truth,’ written about the time of the General Conference of 1901, White Estate Document File, no. 445.

—Quoted in *The Fannie Bolton Story, A collection of Source Documents*, 1990, p. 104.

D. Names of Ellen White's literary assistants.

Ellen White was instructed as to whom she could trust and who were not trustworthy. Among those who helped Ellen White in preparing her writings for publication over the years were James White, Mary Kelsey-White, Lucinda Abbey-Hall, Adelia Patten-Van Horn, Anna Driscoll-Loughborough, Addie Howe-Cogshall, Annie Hale-Royce, Emma Sturgess-Prescott, Mary Clough-Watson, Mrs. J. I. Ings, Mrs. B. L. Whitney, Eliza Burnham, Fannie Bolton, Marian Davis, C. C. Crisler, Minnie Hawkins-Crisler, Maggie Hare, Sarah Peck, and D. E. Robinson.

Probably Mrs. White’s most notable assistant was Marian Davis, who worked for her from 1879 to 1904. She assisted in preparing for publication *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. IV; *Historical Sketches of SDA Foreign Missions*; *The Great Controversy*; *Patriarchs and Prophets*; *Steps to Christ*; *The Desire of Ages*; *Christ Object Lessons*; *Education*; *The Ministry of Healing*, and other books. C. C. Crisler and several of the lady secretaries assisted Ellen White in selecting and arranging material for *Acts of the Apostles*; *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*; *Gospel Workers*; and *Prophets and Kings*. (see *Selected Messages*, bk.1, p. 50; bk. 3, pp. 453-461 for other details.)—R. W. Olson, *101 Questions*, pp. 87, 88.

E. Responsibilities of the literary assistants.

Ellen White felt the need of help from others in the preparation of her manuscripts for publication. W. C. White describes the boundaries that his mother set for her workers:

Mother's copyists are entrusted with the work of correcting grammatical errors, of eliminating unnecessary repetitions, and of grouping paragraphs and sections in their best order. . . .

"Mother's workers of experience, such as Sisters Davis, Burnham, Bolton, Peck, and Hare, who are very familiar with her writings, are authorized to take a sentence, paragraph, or section from one manuscript and incorporate it with another manuscript where the same thought was expressed but not so clearly. But none of Mother's workers are authorized to add to the manuscripts by introducing thoughts of their own.—W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, May 7, 1900. Quoted in R. W. Olson, *101 Questions*, p. 88.

W. C. White's letter to Miss Julia Malcolm, December 10, 1894.

As regards your questions about Mother's writings you may have noticed in her addresses that she has a full vocabulary and much power of description and at the same time you may have noticed faulty grammatical constructions. Those familiar with her writings find the same characteristics and also we find that as scenes which are similar in character and import are impressed upon her mind that she writes them out rapidly without reference to chronological order or other apparent connection. We are often perplexed by this characteristic in some of the prophetic books of the Bible.

The secretaries and copyists who prepare Mother's writings for the printer remove repetitions so that the matter may be brought into the allotted space, they correct bad grammar and they fit the matter for publication. They sometimes carry her best expressions of thought from one paragraph to another but do not introduce their own thought into the matter. The thoughts and the expressions which you mention are Mother's own thoughts and expressions. With kindest regards.—White Estate Correspondence file.

W. C. White's letter to J. J. Gorrell, May 13, 1894.

Mother writes very rapidly. She writes early in the morning, endeavoring to place upon paper a word-picture of the things that are flashed into her mind as a panoramic view of the movements of nations, of communities, of churches, and of individuals.

In her effort to make a word-picture of these comprehensive views that are presented to her, she often writes upon many subjects in one manuscript, without taking time to consider the question of chapters, paragraphs, punctuation, capitalization, or literary perfection.

Her helpers are given the task of deciphering her hasty writing, and of putting her thoughts,—using her words,—into form for publication. The lengthy manuscripts are divided according to subjects. When written out with typewriter, the matter is submitted to Mother for criticism and correction, and when sent forth to the people each manuscript goes with her authority, representing her thoughts.—White Estate correspondence file.

F. Marian Davis, Ellen White's "Bookmaker" from 1879 to 1904.

It was Marian Davis who put Ellen White's books together, drawing from Mrs. White's

letters and manuscripts and doing it under her supervision.

Marian Is My Bookmaker.—Marian's work is of a different order altogether. She is my bookmaker. Fanny [Bolton] . . . never was my bookmaker. How are my books made? Marian does not put in her claim for recognition.

She does her work in this way: She takes my articles which are published in the papers, and pastes them in blank books. She also has a copy of all the letters I write. In preparing a chapter for a book, Marian remembers that I have written something on that special point, which may make the matter more forcible. She begins to search for this, and if when she finds it, she sees that it will make the chapter more clear, she adds it.

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

So you understand that Marian is a most valuable help to me in bringing out my books. Fanny had none of this work to do. Marian has read chapters to her, and Fanny has sometimes made suggestion as to the arrangement of the matter.

This is the difference between the workers. As I have stated, Fanny has been strictly forbidden to change my words for her words. As spoken by the heavenly agencies, the words are severe in their simplicity; and I try to put the thoughts into such simple language that a child can understand every word uttered. The words of someone else would not rightly represent me.

I have written thus fully in order that you may understand the matter. Fanny may claim that she has made my books, but she has not done so. This has been Marian's field, and her work is far in advance of any work Fanny has done for me.—*Letter 61a*, 1900 to G. A. Irwin, (see *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, pp. 91, 92.)

Marian Davis was one of those special people to whom Ellen White looked for more than routine copying and editing. Marian was authorized to drop out needless words . . . or at times to change words when necessary. . . . She helped Mrs. White plan a good number of her books, from the first chapter to the last.

Marian was Ellen White's "bookmaker". . . . She gleaned material, even isolated sentences . . . on the life of Christ from Ellen White's diaries, letters, and articles which she pasted in scrapbooks. She drew material for *The Desire of Ages* from these scrapbooks, the bound E.G. White books, and some longer manuscripts.

In organizing the material into chapters, Marian notes areas on which she had nothing from Ellen White's pen. Apparently the two women had such a close working relationship that Marian felt free to make suggestions to Mrs. White as to what she thought might be lacking from the book. Some of these suggestions Ellen White accepted, but others she rejected. For example, while Marian's advice regarding "the rock, when the water flowed," was accepted for an earlier book . . . her recommendation concerning "the building a tower" and

“the war of Kings” was rejected. Ellen White declared she would not write on these topics unless “the Lord’s Spirit seems to lead me.” [*Letter 131*, 1893]

Marian also made suggestions to Ellen White with reference to Christ’s struggle when tempted to use His divine power . . . and the parables of the pearl and the net. . . . While Ellen White no doubt appreciated these suggestions, it was clearly she herself, and not Marian, who decided what topics she would write on.

Not only did Ellen White do the initial writing, she also took full responsibility for every word which eventually appeared in her books. She explained to her sister Mary, “I read over all that is copied, to see that everything is as it should be. I read all the book manuscript before it is sent to the printer. . . .” This clearly was her routine method of working. Marian Davis once remarked to Ellen White, “Of course, nothing will go that you do not approve.”—R. W. Olson, *How the Desire of Ages Was Written*, pp. 3, 4.

Other examples of what Marian Davis could and could not do.

That Marian enjoyed Ellen White’s complete confidence is evident from a letter written by Mrs. White to her daughter-in-law some years earlier. She stated:

Mary, Willie is in meeting early and late, devising, planning for the doing of better and more efficient work in the cause of God. We see him only at the table.

Marian will go to him for some little matters that it seems she could settle for herself. She is nervous and hurried and he so worn he has to just shut his teeth together and hold his nerves as best he can. I have had a talk with her and told her she must settle many things herself that she has been bringing Willie.

Her mind is on every point and the connections, and his mind has been plowing through a variety of difficult subjects until his brain reels and then his mind is in no way prepared to take up these little minutiae. She must just carry some of these things that belong to her part of the work, and not bring them before him nor worry his mind with them. Sometimes I think she will kill us both, all unnecessarily, with her little things she can just as well settle herself as to bring them before us. Every little change of a word she wants us to see. I am about tired of this business.—*Letter 64a*, 1889 (see *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, pp. 92, 93). Quoted in R. W. Olson, *101 Questions*, p. 100.

Apparently Marian Davis could change words without having each one individually approved, since Ellen White’s normal practice was to go over the typed manuscript before it was finalized and sent off to the printer.

Marian Davis’s letter to C. H. Jones, March 11, 1897.

Marian had input on the organization, chapter headings, and even the titles of Ellen White’s books.

We noted the titles mentioned—“Desire of Ages” and “Desire of All Nations.” Sister White prefers the former, as I do, with all others who have expressed an opinion.—White Estate correspondence file.

Marian Davis’s letter to Sister Burnham, June 15, 1898.

As far as Marian was concerned, it was Ellen White who maintained final veto power over chapter headings, etc. (i.e., over book matters).

The headings of chapters, 11 (the Baptism), 16, (In His Temple), 20, (The Sabbath), 55, 73 (Not with outward show), (the Comforter shall come), are absolutely prohibited by Sister White. She does not wish them to be used, even once.—White Estate correspondence file.

Interestingly, in actual fact, all the forbidden titles except the one for chapter 73 were used in *The Desire of Ages*. Apparently the earlier chapter titles had already been set in type by the Pacific Press in Oakland, California, prior to when this letter was received from Marian Davis who was in Australia. The first edition of *The Desire of Ages* came out in late 1898.

Conclusion of Fred Veltman about role of Marian Davis in the production of *The Desire of Ages*.

Perhaps we should credit Marian Davis with the literary style and construction of the final DA [*The Desire of Ages*] text insofar as the beauty and clarity of expression, the syntactical, structural composition of the sentences, and the arrangement of the chapter content.—Fred Veltman, *Life of Christ Research Project*, 1988, p. 927.

This suggestion agrees with Ellen White’s description of Marian Davis as being her “bookmaker.”

G. Examples of manuscript editing.

Some of her [Ellen G. White’s] manuscripts required more attention from her copyists than others. W. C. White explains the difference:

Sometimes when Mother’s mind is rested, and free, the thoughts are presented in language that is not only clear and strong, but beautiful and correct; and at times when she is weary and oppressed with heavy burdens of anxiety, or when the subject is difficult to portray, there are repetitions and ungrammatical sentences.—W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, May 7, 1900.

On the following pages, *Manuscript 30a*, 1896, p. 1, is shown, first in Ellen White's own handwriting, then in an exact transcription of the original, with editorial corrections indicated. Two paragraphs from this manuscript as now published in the book *In Heavenly Places* are also shown.

The first page of the handwritten original of *Letter 2*, 1874, is also reproduced, as well as the published version.

It will be observed that the 1896 manuscript required considerable editing, while the 1874 letter needed very little.—R. W. Olson, *101 Questions*, p. 89.

Example of extensive editing.
(Part one)

Reproduction of Manuscript 30a, 1896, p. 1, written at Ashfield, N.S.W., Australia, October 4, 1896.
Original size 7 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches [19 x 22.5 cm].

Sunday evening, Oct 4 I was doing my appointed work
with the church at Ashfield, N.S.W. left for his appointment
of Parramatta. The Rev. was so kind to assist me I opened the
Meeting with prayer and then I spoke to the people

Under the deep blessing of the Spirit of God I had
a decided message from the Lord for the people.
I could not but present before them the dangers which are
so many concerning the members of the church. We are in a position
where for remaining in a world of sinners & spiritually blind
has become a danger to our men, there is the great
danger of losing our soul and the Lord Jesus I asked do we
receive the Bible as the Word of God, the Bible is God's Word *
to us as much as though I could hear every word
of our only Son the importance of the Word, with all that
we could not open our Bibles with indifference and
would be like the opening of the Scriptures could be regarded as an
accident with the first sight, the Word of the living God
and surely, surely, surely but surely, if we do not read the
Word of God and not truly read the Word we need conversion
but for the Word is a message to us to be obeyed
a volume to be perused as it is called in a dictionary
and spirit of God to be in the Bible written for us
learning upon which the end of the Word is as well
there is it in your hearts. So you are your words true and
kind and pure and edifying in your lives. From the light
of the Spirit and the Word of God we are to be
strengthened by the study and eat the Word of God for we are
surrounded by those which are not, then we open the Word at us
and give our lives with the uprightness of the Word our own

Example of extensive editing.
(Part two)

An exact typewritten reproduction of the original of *Manuscript 30a*, 1896, p. 1. Ellen White's literary assistant made the grammatical improvements shown here.

Sunday evening, Oct. 4, According to appointment I met with the church at Ashfield. W.C.W. ^{went to meet} ~~left for~~ his appointment at Parramatta ^{and} ~~There~~ ^{at Ashfield} was no one ^{to} assist me. I opened the meeting with prayer, and then I spoke to the people ~~the~~ under the deep moving of the Spirit of God. I had a decided message from the Lord for the people.

I could not but present before them their dangers. There are ~~so many~~ ^{who, though are} unconverted ~~yet~~ ^{members of the church}. ~~But there is no~~ ^{any one} ~~not one is without~~ excuse for ^{any one} remaining in a cold lifeless state spiritually. Christ has warned, Be ye not servants of men, ^{but} ~~men~~ There is ~~the great~~ ^{that we will} danger ^{of serving men instead of} ~~and not~~ the Lord Jesus. ~~I asked~~ ^{Do we} receive the Bible as the Oracles of God? ^{The Bible is God's voice speaking} *
to us, ^{just surely} ~~as much~~ as though ^{we} ~~you~~ could hear every ^{him with our ears.} ~~his word~~
If we ^{realized} ~~only knew~~ the importance of ^{this} ~~the~~ Word, ~~With what awe~~ ^{it} ~~would we open our Bibles~~ ^{and} ~~with what earnest~~ ^{ness} ~~consideration~~ ^{search its precepts.} ~~would we have~~ ^{reading and contemplating} The opening of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Most High. The Word of the living God is not merely ~~something~~ written, but spoken. ^{If we do not eat the} ~~Word~~ of God, ~~and we live by that word~~ we need converting.

^{God's} For it is ~~for the~~ Word is a message to us to be obeyed, ^{and with} a volume to be perused ~~as dili~~ diligently, ^{in a disposition} and ^{willing} spirit yet ^{to} take in the truths written for ^{the admonition of those} ~~our~~ ^{are} ~~learning~~ upon whom the ends of the World ~~is~~ come.

~~Then is it in your families is your are your words true and kind and pure and edifying in your home From the light God has given me their is great weakness where there should be~~

^{Let us} ~~strength if we~~ study and eat the Word of God for we are ^{Bible} ~~built up from~~ ^{composed of} that which we eat. When we open the ~~word~~ let us compare our lives with ^{its} ~~the~~ requirements, ^{measuring} ~~of the word~~ bring our

(*The quotation from *In Heavenly Places* starts here.)

Example of extensive editing

(Part three)

MAY 7

AN AUDIENCE WITH THE MOST HIGH

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.
1 Thess. 2:13.

Manuscript 30a, 1896

The Bible is God's voice speaking to us just as surely as though we could hear Him with our ears. The word of the living God is not merely written, but spoken. Do we receive the Bible as the oracle of God? If we realized the importance of this Word, with what awe would we open it, and with what earnestness would we search its precepts. The reading and contemplating of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Most High.

God's Word is a message to us to be obeyed, a volume to be perused diligently, and with a spirit willing to take in the truths written for the admonition of those upon whom the ends of the world are come. It must not be neglected for any other book. . . . When we open the Bible, let us compare our lives with its requirements, measuring our character by the great moral standard of righteousness."

The life of Christ, that gives life to the world, is in His Word. It was by His word that Jesus healed disease and cast out demons; by His word He stilled the sea, and raised the dead; and the people bore witness that His word was with power. He spoke the Word of God; as He had spoken to all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament. The whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ. It is our source of power.

As our physical life is sustained by food, so our spiritual life is sustained by the Word of God. . . . As we must eat for ourselves in order to receive nourishment, so we must receive the Word for ourselves. We are not to obtain it merely through the medium of another mind.

Yes, the Word of God is the bread of life. . . . It gives immortal vigor to the soul, perfecting the experience, and bringing joys that will abide forever."

Example of slight editing.

Reproduction of the first page of
Letter 2, 1874. Original page size
5 x 7 inches. The published version
is from Selected Messages, book 1,
p. 74.

Battle Creek, Michigan
August 24, 1874

DEAR BROTHER LOUGHBOROUGH:

I hereby testify in the fear of God that the charges of
Miles Grant, of Mrs. Burdick, and others published in the
Crisis are not true. The statements in reference to my course
in forty-four are false.

With my brethren and sisters, after the time passed in
forty-four I did believe no more sinners would be con-
verted. But I never had a vision that no more sinners
would be converted. And am clear and free to state no one
has ever heard me say or has read from my pen statements
which will justify them in the charges they have made
against me upon this point.

It was on my first journey east to relate my visions that
the precious light in regard to the heavenly sanctuary was
opened before me and I was shown the open and shut door.
We believed that the Lord was soon to come in the clouds
of heaven. I was shown that there was a great work to be
done in the world for those who had not had the light and
rejected it. Our brethren could not understand this with our
faith in the immediate appearing of Christ. Some accused
me of saying that my Lord delayeth His coming, especially
the fanatical ones. I saw that in '44 God had opened a
door and no man could shut it, and shut a door and no man
could open it. Those who rejected the light which was
brought to the world by the message of the second angel
went into darkness, and how great was that darkness.

I never have stated or written that the world was
doomed or damned. I never have under any circumstances
used this language to any one, however sinful. I have ever
had messages of reproof for those who used these harsh
expressions.—Letter 2, 1874.

Battle Creek Mich. Aug 24/74

Dear Bro Loughborough

I hereby testify in the fear of
God that the charges Miles Grant
of Mrs Burdick and others published in
the crisis is not true. The statements in
reference to my course in forty four is false.

With my Brethren and sisters after the
time passed in forty four I did believe
no more sinners would be converted
But I never had a vision that no
more sinners would be converted.

And am clear and free to state that no
one has ever heard me say or has read
from my pen statements which will
justify them in the charges they have
made against me in this point.

It was on my first journey east that
the precious light in regard to the heavenly
sanctuary was opened before me and I was shown the open
and shut door.

Two examples of *The Desire of Ages* manuscript taken from R. W. Olson's "*How the Desire of Ages Was Written*," pp. 35, 37.

Example of page edited by Marian Davis.

Notice that there are no dots, apparently indicating that no approval of changes was necessary. The only checking was the final re-reading by Ellen White.

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Parable-7.
Childhood-12

was much confusion as they left the city ^{and} on the way the pleasure

of journeying with friends and acquaintances ^{to} absorbed their atten-

tion, ^{and} that they ^{parents of Jesus} did not notice his absence till night

came on. Then as they halted for rest, they missed the helpful hand of

their child. Supposing him to be with their company, they had felt no

anxiety. Young as he was, they had trusted him implicitly, expecting

as ^{matter of course}, that when ~~they~~ needed, he would be ready to

assist them, anticipating their ^{always} need as he had ~~and~~ done. But now their

fears were roused. They searched for him throughout their company, but

in vain. Shuddering they remembered how Herod had tried to destroy

him in his infancy. ~~They executed their plot to take his life.~~ Dark

forebodings filled their hearts ^{and} they ^{hitherto} approached themselves

Returning to Jerusalem, they pursued their search. The next

day as they mingled with the worshippers in the temple, ^{their attention}

was ^{arrested by a familiar voice}. They could not mistake it; no other

voice was like his, so serious and earnest, yet so full of melody.

In the school of the rabbis they found Jesus ^{in the midst of}

the ^{principle and justice of the law}. Rejoiced as they were, they could

not forget their grief and anxiety ^{and} when he was alone with them,

the mother said, in words that implied a rebuke, "Son, why hast thou

thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrow-

ing."

Invitation-6

then hadst hearkened to my commandments; then had thy peace becom as a

river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." / ~~Deuteronomy~~ Isa.

48:18.

Why we take Christ at his word, and surrender ^{then} our souls to

his keeping, ^{then} ~~we~~ ^{will} ~~live~~ ^{live} to his ordering, we shall find peace and quiet-

ude. Nothing of the world can make us sad when Jesus makes us glad by

his presence. ~~It~~ In perfect acquiescence there is perfect peace. Our

lives may seem a tangle, but as we commit ourselves to the wise master-

worker, he will bring out the pattern of life and character that will be

to his own glory. ~~The ideal of perfect beauty will be brought out in~~

us; and ~~the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep~~

our hearts and minds ~~through Christ Jesus.~~ Phil. 4:7.

And that character which expresses the glory, the character,

of Christ, will be received into the Paradise of God. A renovated race

will walk with him in white, for they are worthy.

As through Jesus we enter into rest, heaven begins here. We

respond to his invitation, Come, learn of me, and in thus coming we be-

gin the life eternal. Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through

Christ. The longer we are in the heaven of bliss, the more and still

more of glory will be opened to us; and the more we know of God, the more

intense will be our happiness. As we walk with Jesus in this life, we

may be filled with his love, satisfied with his presence. All that

human nature can bear, we may receive here. But what is this compared

with the hereafter? There "are they before the throne of God, and serve

him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall

See p. 72

H. Sometimes others were asked to constructively criticize manuscripts.

At times [Ellen White] sought counsel from the brethren, not on the content of her writings, but on the effectiveness of the way she had expressed herself, as well as on the use to be made of the materials. She informed [Elder] W. H. Littlejohn:

I have all my publications closely examined. I desire that nothing shall appear in print without careful investigation. Of course I would not want men who have not a Christian experience or are lacking in ability to appreciate literary merit to be placed as judges of what is essential to come before the people, as pure provender thoroughly winnowed from the chaff. I laid out all my manuscript on *Patriarchs and Prophets* and on [*Spirit of Prophecy*] Vol. IV before the book committee for examination and criticism. I also placed these manuscripts in the hands of some of our ministers for examination. The more criticism of them the better for the work.—*Letter 49*, 1894. (R. W. Olson, *101 Questions*, p. 96)

Several years earlier, Ellen White asked her husband, James White, for his reaction regarding inviting Elders J. H. Waggoner and J. N. Loughborough to read over some of her manuscripts. Elder Waggoner had been a newspaper editor and publisher prior to becoming a Seventh-day Adventist.

How will it do to read my manuscript to Elders [J. H.] Waggoner and [J. N.] Loughborough? If there is any wording on doctrinal points not so clear as might be, he might discern it (W I mean).—*Letter 4a*, 1876 (*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 104).

When in 1910 it was found that the type for *The Great Controversy* must be reset, Ellen White informs us:

I determined that we should have everything closely examined, to see if the truths it contained were stated in the very best manner, to convince those not of our faith that the Lord had guided and sustained me in the writing of its pages.—*Letter 56*, 1911.

This word was conveyed to various ones, including W. W. Prescott, editor of *The Protestant Magazine*. In response, Prescott wrote W. C. White in April, 1910, offering him 105 suggestions on points which he felt needed improvement in the book. About half of Prescott's suggestions were accepted. These mainly called for references or appendix notes or greater precision in expression, while some had to do with historical fact. Ellen White accepted none of Prescott's recommendations for the altering of her doctrinal positions.—R. W. Olson, *101 Questions*, p. 96.

I. Final approval was given by Ellen White.

While the chapters for each book were being prepared, Ellen White was constantly consulted, and when the work was completed, she gave it her final approval.

At the age of 75 she explained her work to her older sister, Mary (Harmon) Foss: Now, my sister, do not think that I have forgotten you; for I have not. You know that I have

books to make. My last effort is a book on true education. The writing of this book has been very trying to me, but it is nearly finished. I am now completing the last chapter. This book will not have in it so much matter as there is in some of my larger works, but the instruction it contains is important. I feel the need of help from God continually.

I am still as active as ever. I am not in the least decrepit. I am able to do much work, writing and speaking as I did years ago.

I read over all that is copied, to see that everything is as it should be. I read all the book manuscript before it is sent to the printer. So you can see that my time must be fully occupied.—*Letter 133*, 1902. EGW letter to Mary Foss, Aug. 10, 1902. Quoted in R. W. Olson, *101 Questions*, p. 103.

Statement by Fannie Bolton, November 11, 1894.

Sister White is the prophet of the Lord for the remnant church, and though the Lord has seen fit to choose one for this work who is not proficient in grammar and rhetoric, and this lack is supplied by others, yet she is responsible for every thought, for every expression, in her writings. Every manuscript that is edited goes back to her for examination. . . .

As far as changing Sister White's expressions is concerned, I can say that just as far it is consistent with grammar and rhetoric, her expressions are left intact.—Letter from Fannie Bolton to Miss Malcolm. Quoted in *The Fannie Bolton Story, A Collection of Source Documents*, pp. 37. 38.

V. MRS. WHITE'S USE OF LITERARY SOURCES, OR WHY SHE BORROWED FROM OTHER AUTHORS.

Ellen White's literary borrowing—Some seems to have been done unconsciously.

Ellen White appears to have engaged in her borrowing consciously at times but unconsciously at other times. Where a longer passage from another writer appears in her works we may be quite sure that she had that author's book before her as she wrote. However, striking phrases drawn from others appear occasionally in her sermons where she did not have books to refer to. It was her custom to preach without notes of any kind. Apparently these gems had so deeply impressed themselves on her mind at the time she read them that they became a part of her own vocabulary. For example, in a sermon Ellen White gave at a Bible School on February 6, 1890, she declared:

He [Satan] cast his hellish shadow right between us and our hope, and our strength, and our comfort, that we should not see Him, that he might eclipse Jesus, that we should discern Him and what He was to us, and what He would do for us, and what He would be to us—that he should cast this dark and gloomy shadow between us and our Saviour.—*Manuscript 10*, 1890, p. 4.

In this warning of Satan's devices, Ellen White was probably unconsciously echoing John Harris, who wrote, concerning Satan:

Planting himself between God and man, he sought to intercept every beam from heaven, and to throw his awful shadow across the earth; the gloom of his presence fell, like a pall over human hope, involving us in darkness that might be felt.—*The Great Teacher*, 1836, ed., p. 134.

A day earlier, on February 5, 1890, Ellen White spoke of the "divine credentials" that we as a people should bear to the world, a phrase which may have reflected Harris, who wrote that Christ was surrounded with "divine credentials"—*The Great Teacher*, 1836 ed., p. 69.

Apparently some of Ellen White's use of the language of others should be attributed to her unusually keen and retentive memory.—R. W. Olson, *Ellen G. White's Use of Uninspired Sources*, pp. 12,13.

Basically Ellen White was an evangelist, so she was constantly looking for good phrases and illustrations to use effectively in her sermons and writings.

Ellen White's own explanation given in the "Introduction" to *Great Controversy*.

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

[The following four reasons that Ellen White borrowed from other literary sources have been suggested by Dr. Robert W. Olson, Director of the Ellen G. White Estate from 1979-1990.]

A. To help her express well what she had seen in vision.

With only three grades of formal schooling, she found that reading widely aided her. She was on the alert for clearer and better expressions to use in the composition of her articles and books. Had her thoughts been ordinary ones, she might have had a far easier time writing them out. But in vision she had been shown, for example, the pathos of the

Cross, and found herself in anguish to find the best words with which to communicate the utter depths of meaning and feeling with which she had been inspired. When she found phrases in other Christian writers that helped her toward expressing what she felt, she was grateful. W. C. White states:

In the writing of her books, she has sometimes found it very difficult and laborious to put into language the scenes presented to her; and when she has found in the language of another a correct representation of the thought presented to her, she has sometimes copied sentences and paragraphs,—feeling that it was her privilege to utilize the correct statements of other writers, of the scenes that have been presented to her.—W. C. White to J. J. Gorrell, May 13, 1904. Quoted in R. W. Olson, *101 Questions*, p. 71.

Ellen White believed that all truth and goodness in the world originates with God.

Since God is the source of all true knowledge, it as, as we have seen, the first object of education to direct our minds to His revelation of Himself.—*Education*, p. 16.

Every gleam of thought, every flash of the intellect, is from the Light of the world—*Education*, p. 14.

All the varied capabilities that men possess—of mind and soul and body—are given them by God. . . . Every faculty, every attribute, with which the Creator has endowed us is to be employed for His glory, and for the uplifting of our fellow men.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 595.

God desires that His workers in every line shall look to Him as the giver of all they possess. All right inventions and improvements have their source in Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 353, 354.

All the good qualities that men possess are the gift of God; their good deeds are performed by the grace of God through Christ. Since they owe all to God the glory of whatever they are or do belongs to Him alone; they are but instruments in His hands.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 717.

Since Ellen White believed that all true knowledge comes originally from God, if He inspired her with a thought as well as had given the same idea to another person, she seemed to have no hesitation about employing the other author's language, especially if it presented the thought better than she felt she could present it.

B. She borrowed historical, geographical and chronological details not revealed to her in vision.

W. C. White to L. E. Froom, Dec. 13, 1934.

In some of the historical matters such as are brought out in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, and in *Acts of the Apostles* and in *The Great Controversy*, the main outlines were made very clear and plain to her, and when she came to write up these topics, she was left to study the Bible

and history to get dates and geographical relations and to perfect her description of details.—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 462.

W. C. White to L. E. Froom, January 8, 1928.

The great events occurring in the life of our Lord were presented to her in panoramic scenes as also were the other portions of *The Great Controversy*. In a few of these scenes chronology and geography were clearly presented, but in the greater part of the revelation the flashlight scenes [i.e., old method of flash photography], which were exceedingly vivid, and the conversations and the controversies, which she heard and was able to narrate, were not marked geographically or chronologically, and she was left to study the Bible and history, and the writings of men who had presented the life of our Lord to get the chronological and geographical connection.

Another purpose served by the reading of history and the *Life of Our Lord* and the *Life of St. Paul*, was that in so doing there was brought vividly to her mind scenes presented clearly in vision, but which were through the lapse of years and her strenuous ministry, dimmed in her memory.

Many times in the reading of Hanna, Farrar, or Fleetwood, she would run on to a description of a scene which had been vividly presented to her, but forgotten, and which she was able to describe more in detail than that which she had read.—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, pp. 459, 460.

W. C. White to W. W. Eastman, November 4, 1912.

When writing out the chapters for *Great Controversy*, she sometimes gave a partial description of an important historical event, and when her copyist who was preparing the manuscripts for the printer, made inquiry regarding time and place, Mother would say that those things are recorded by conscientious historians. Let the dates used by those historians be inserted. At other times in writing what had been presented to her, Mother found such perfect descriptions of events and presentations of facts and of doctrines written out in our denominational books, that she copied the words of these authorities.

When *Controversy* was written, Mother never thought that the readers would take it as authority on historical dates or use it to settle controversy regarding details of history, and she does not now feel that it should be used in that way. Mother regards with great respect the work of those faithful historians who devoted years of time to the study of God's great plan as presented in the prophecy, and outworking of that plan as recorded in history.—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 447.

Marian Davis to C. H. Jones, November 23, 1896.

Transposition of chapters.

In the order of chapters we followed Andrews' Harmony, as given in his *Life of Christ*. He is generally regarded as the very best authority, and is quoted by leading writers. We know of no better arrangement than his.—White Estate correspondence file.

The actual name of the book from which the chronology followed in *The Desire of Ages* was Samuel Andrews' *Life of our Lord*.

Marian Davis to Eliza J. Burnham, June 15, 1898.

Suggestion for explanatory statement to be included in the preface of the forthcoming book, *The Desire of Ages*.

In the preface, would it not be well to state, in some way, that the book is not a harmony of the gospels, that it does not attempt to teach chronology. It's purpose is to present the love of God, the divine beauty of the life of Christ, not to satisfy the questioning of critics.

Explanatory statement from preface of *The Desire of Ages*.

It is not, however, the purpose of this work to set forth a harmony of the Gospels, or even to give in strictly chronological order the important events and wonderful lessons of the life of Christ; its purpose is to present the love of God as revealed in His Son, the divine beauty of the life of Christ, of which all may partake, and not to satisfy the desires of the merely curious not the questionings of critics.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 9, 10.

Ellen G. White to Edson and Willie White, Dec. 22, 1885.

Tell Mary to find me some histories of the Bible that would give me the order of events. I have nothing and can find nothing in the library here.—*Letter 38*, 1885.

Ellen White found the reading of historical works helpful. W. C. White's statement before the General Conference Fall Council, Oct. 30, 1911.

Mother has never claimed to be authority on history. The things which she has written out, are descriptions of flashlight pictures and other representations given her regarding the actions of men, and the influence of these actions upon the work of God for the salvation of men, with views of past, present, and future history in its relation to this work. In connection with the writing out of these views, she has made use of good and clear historical statements to help make plain to the reader the things which she is endeavoring to present. When I was a mere boy, I heard her read D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation* to my father. She read to him a large part, if not the whole, of the volumes. She has read other histories of the Reformation. This has helped her to locate and describe many of the events and the movements presented to her in vision. This is somewhat similar to the way in which the study of the Bible helps her to locate and describe the many figurative representations given to her regarding the development of the great controversy in our day between truth and error.—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 437.

W. C. White's sermon in Takoma Park, Maryland, Dec. 17, 1905.

One Sabbath, at Basel, as I was reading Wylie's *History of Protestantism*, telling about the experience of the Roman armies coming against the Hungarians [Bohemians], and how a

large body of persecutors would see a little body of Protestants, and become frightened, and beat a hasty retreat. As I read it to Mother, she interrupted me, and told me a lot of things in the pages ahead, and told me many things not in the book at all. She said, "I never read about it, but that scene has been presented to me over and over again. I have seen the papal armies, and sometimes before they had come in sight of the Protestants, the angels of God would give them a representation of large armies, that would make them flee."

I said, "Why did you not put it into your book?" [*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4.] She said, "I did not know where to put it."—W. C. White Talk at Takoma Hall, Takoma Park, Maryland, December 17, 1905.

Why God chose not to give Ellen White the exact chronological/historical setting for each vision is still unclear to me. Apparently it was not important to God when the gospels were written in the first century (hence the so-called "synoptic problem"), and it appears likewise not to have been important to Him 1800 years later when He gave visions to Ellen White that contained historical scenes. That should not be surprising to us since God is the same yesterday, today, and forever; He never changes.

The following example of a vision that lacked chronological setting occurred in Australia at the time Avondale College was being established.

One morning after I had asked Mother if she had anything new for us, she said, "What are you doing in your Board meeting? What kind of a time are you having?" I answered, "I do not need to tell you; the Lord can tell you what you need to know, better than I can, and I might not tell it impartially." She said, "Willie White, you tell me what you are doing." I asked why. Then she said, "It is presented to me that you are having a hard time, and when you reach a certain point, I am to have something to say. I want to know if you have reached that point."

Mother, I said, we are having a hard time, but for several reasons I did not want to tell you about it. Then she insisted, and I told her the best I could from my stand point about the status of our work. When I had finished she said, "That is all right. I do not believe I will go to-day, but I think you are getting pretty near to the point when I must come over and bear my testimony." In a day or two she came over and told us what had been presented to her.—W. C. White's Sermon, "The Integrity of the Testimonies to the Church," Lincoln, Nebraska, Nov. 25, 1905, pp. 15, 16.

A biblical example is interesting in this connection. When the prophet Samuel was told to anoint a son of Jesse as Israel's next king, why did not God tell Samuel immediately which son it was? Instead, Samuel had to look over all of the sons one by one, only to discover that it was none of them, but rather David who was not even there right then. Again, I do not have a good answer, beyond the fact that God obviously places incredible trust in His prophets.

Report of Don McAdams' research on one portion of *The Great Controversy* manuscript.

About half the rough draft is entirely Mrs. White's own work, with no debts to James Wylie or other historians. These portions of the manuscript deal with the cosmic significance of earthly history, quite literally the great controversy between Christ and Satan. There is, for example, an extended comparison of the deaths of Huss and Christ. None of this material was included in the final draft of *Great Controversy*. In short, McAdams found that "the only completely original part of the manuscript was all cut out and in fact has never appeared in print anywhere."

Most of the remainder of the rough draft is simply copied from Wylie, in many cases word for word. In two instances Mrs. White notes the specific page from which she is working. "Insert page 148 paragraph on second column," she notes parenthetically at one point. Mrs. White's contribution was to abridge Wylie's material, reducing 33 pages of Wylie to 14 in *Great Controversy*.

The rough draft was later polished considerably, probably by Marian Davis, Mrs. White's literary assistant, so that the final version of the Huss story appeared in graceful paraphrase of Wylie, rather than simple, direct borrowing. A few new paragraphs from Wylie which had not been used in the rough draft appeared in the printed version, added apparently by Miss Davis in the late stages of editing.*

McAdams' work shows beyond cavil that Wylie was the source for the historical details in the Huss narrative. It is also reasonable to believe, as McAdams does, "that not all of the historical events described in *Great Controversy* were first seen in vision by Ellen White."—Eric Anderson, "Ellen White and Reformation Historians," *Spectrum*, vol. 9, no. 3, p. 26.

*Although unlikely, there is the remote possibility that this happened. But as described in the following paragraphs from Dr. Fred Veltman, we have no evidence that Marian Davis actually inserted materials on her own. And even had she done so, Ellen White would have read over the finalized manuscript to make certain that the thoughts she wanted to present had not been changed.

Veltman's conclusions about Ellen White's use of sources vs. her secretaries doing the borrowing.

As we carefully studied the nature and degree of literary dependency, which included Ellen Whites' personal journals, it became very clear to us that it was Ellen White herself who was copying from the sources. We need not look to the work of her secretaries to account for the source parallels found in her writings.—Fred Veltman, "*The Desire of Ages* Project: the Data," *Ministry*, October, 1990, pp. 6, 7.

I found no evidence to indicate that Marian Davis was involved in the original composition of any Ellen White text. But without the original manuscripts it is difficult to prove that such did not happen with any portion of the text of *The Desire of Ages*.—"The Desire of Ages Project: the Conclusions." *Ministry*, December, 1990, p.14.

Specific historical question not settled by Ellen White's books.

We will make a great mistake if we lay aside historical research, and endeavor to settle historical questions by the use of Mother's books as an authority when she herself does not wish them to be used in any such way.—W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, Nov. 4, 1912, White Estate Document File, no. 65.

Ellen White borrowed more than just historical details.

The material borrowed by Mrs. White included historical, geographical, and chronological information as well as devotional reflection, theological concepts . . . and scriptural and prophetic expositions. She also employed extra-Biblical comments on the lives of various Biblical characters, often turning the speculations and conjectures of her sources into statements of positive fact.—Ron Graybill, *E.G. White's Literary Work: An Update*, 1981, p. 11.

Ellen White's concern over "reality" may also be noted in the lack of supposition and probability in her statements. When in reference to the life of Christ, His viewpoint, or that of His disciples, the source uses such expressions as "we can imagine," "it may be supposed," or "no doubt," Ellen White will use a positive expression. . . .

[Although she] does not comment on all aspects of a given topic or event . . . what she does treat is handled with a reporter's style. That is to say her account reads as a factual record; nothing is supposed. Ellen White writes as if she is dealing with realities, whether on earth or beyond the world we see. The reader is not left to imagine anything except what it would have been like to have been in Palestine in the time of Jesus and to have faced the realities she is describing. . . .

Whenever her sources used hyperbolic statements, embellished the text with obvious literary expressions, or left the main point to develop some interesting sidelight or curiosity, Ellen White bypassed their comment and stayed with the main storyline and with the essential elements of the background and characterizations. The reader of the *DA* is hardly ever conscious of the text itself or impressed with the literary skill of the author. One is caught up with the narrative and its meaning and appeal. This cannot always be said of the sources she used.—Fred Veltman, *Life of Christ Research Project*, pp. 929, 930.

C. At times the Lord led her to the discovery and use of beautiful gems in the works of other authors.

Statement by W. C. White and Dore Robinson.

In her early experience when she was sorely distressed over the difficulty of putting into human language the revelations of truths that had been imparted to her, she was reminded of the fact that all wisdom and knowledge comes from God and she was assured that God would bestow grace and guidance. She was told that in the reading of religious books and journals, she would find precious gems of truth expressed in acceptable language, and that she would be given help from heaven to recognize these and to separate them from the rubbish of error with which she would sometimes find them associated.—W. C. White and D. E. Robinson, *Brief Statements Regarding the Writings of Ellen G. White*, p. 5, [June 4, 1981, *Adventist Review*, insert edition]

Additional statement by W. C. White and Dore Robinson.

Mrs. White read such books as she considered would be helpful to her in acquiring skill in presenting in clear, forceful language the instruction she had to give. Here was not, however, a case of one void of the thoughts she wished to present, and consulting books for the purpose of finding themes upon which she might write. On the contrary abundant light had been given her and she was looking for helpful and concise forms of expression and for gems of truth tersely expressed. This she did with the divine assurance that she would be guided in distinguishing the true from the false.

In some instances she copied or paraphrased statements that exactly suited her purpose from historians of good repute, especially descriptive passages where she found them to be in exact accord with what had been revealed to her. In some instances these sentences were enclosed in quotation marks and in some instances they were not, especially where she paraphrased the working to better express her thoughts.

Mrs. White's copying from others was not a necessity, but was done chiefly to conserve time in the interests of brevity and forcefulness.—White and Robinson, *Brief Statements*, p. 11, [June 4, 1981, *Adventist Review*, insert edition.]

Example: Ellen White paraphrases from J. A. Wylie's description of Lake Zurich in her own personal diary after her visit to the lake. (See next page)

... We rode out in a rowboat upon the Lake Zurich which was narrow but thirty-five miles long. This gave us a good idea of the extent of Zurich and the many cantons situated on the borders of the lake. Zurich is pleasantly situated on the shores of Lake Zurich. This is a noble expanse of water, enclosed with banks which swell upwards, clothed with vineyards and pine forests, from amid which hamlets and white villas gleam out amid trees and cultivated hills which give variety and beauty to the picture, while in the far off horizon the glaciers are seen blending with the golden clouds. On the right the region is walled in with the craggy rampart of the Abbis [sic] Alps, but the mountains stand back from the shore and by permitting the light to fall freely upon the bosom of the lake and on the ample sweep of its lovely and fertile banks, give a beauty to the picture which pen or brush of the artist could not equal.

The neighboring lake of Zug is in marked contrast to Zurich, the placid waters and slumbering shores seem perpetually wrapped in the shadows.
—E. G. White *Diary*, May 15, 1887, *Manuscript* 29, 1887, p. 16.

Zurich is pleasantly situated on the shores of the lake of that name. This is a noble expanse of water, enclosed within banks which swell gently upwards, clothed here with vineyards, there with pine-forest, from amid which hamlets and white villas gleam out and enliven the scene, while in the far-off horizon the glaciers are seen blending with the golden clouds. On the right the region is walled in by the craggy rampart of the Albis Alp, but the mountains stand back from the shore, and by permitting the light to fall freely upon the bosom of the lake, and on the ample sweep of its lovely and fertile banks, give a freshness and airiness to the prospect as seen from the city, which strikingly contrasts with the neighboring Lake of Zug, where the placid waters and the slumbering shore seem perpetually wrapped in the shadows of the great mountains.

—J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, pp. 435, 436.

W. C. White knew the Source of his mother's information. On September 25, 1899, he wrote to F. E. Belden:

It is not necessary that you or Edson or any other person shall give particulars regarding the work at Battle Creek in order to get Mother's counsel as to the course that should be pursued, because the matters which transpire there are laid open before her clearly from time to time. Mother is carrying a very heavy burden regarding the work at Battle Creek, and especially at the Review and Herald, and she is writing frequently to the managers and to the officers of the General Conference, laying out principles and calling attention to dangers.—Quoted in A.L. White, *Ellen G. White, The Australian Years, 1891-1900*, p. 403.

Study of dissimilarities needs to be undertaken as well as similarities.

In the whole question of borrowing, study should be given to differences as well as similarities before conclusions can be definitely drawn. In one study that the White

Estate staff at the office in Washington, D.C., undertook, a chapter in *Desire of Ages* was compared with ten books on the life of Christ known to have been in Ellen White's library. Robert Olson did the chapter on the resurrection of Lazarus (chapter 58, "Lazarus Come Forth"). He found no case where more than four or five words could be traced directly to another source.

One discovery he mentions of interest is in the extra biblical account of the return of the messenger who had reported to Jesus on Lazarus' illness. Of the six who make any comment (Abbott, Edersheim, Farrar, Hanna, March, McMillan), they all agree that he returned to Mary and Martha after Lazarus' death. Ellen White is the only one who says that Lazarus was still alive and died later.

It is clear that even when she employed the language of others in their description of an event, she did not just blindly follow everything they said.

A comparison of Ellen G. White and Calvin Stowe.

William S. Peterson asserted that Ellen White took not just fine language and historical information from other authors, but ideas as well. He mentions that Ellen White borrowed not only Calvin Stowe's words; but also his ideas when she wrote *Manuscript 24, 1886*, now published in *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 19-21. (See *Spectrum*, Autumn, 1971, pp. 73-84.) When David Neff was a Seminary student in 1973, he responded to Peterson's assertion with a carefully researched 29-page paper in which he compares and contrasts Stowe and Ellen White line by line and word by word. According to Neff:

We have evidence of her writing most of the ideas which are common to her and Dr. Stowe at a time prior to the writing of this manuscript. Indeed, some of these references antedate any possible awareness on her part of Dr. Stowe's book. In addition to the common theological material, there are several points at which the two authors diverge or have distinctively different emphases. These are of sufficient importance for us to conclude that in writing *Manuscript 24, 1886*, Mrs. White was not "appropriating the ideas of another man."—*Ellen White's alleged Literary and Theological Indebtedness to Calvin Stowe*, p. 25.

Neff's findings fully support Ellen White's position that her basic concepts or ideas came, not from human sources, but from God.—R. W. Olson, *Ellen G. White's Use of Sources*, p. 10, 11.

One example, discovered by David Neff, well illustrates how Ellen White borrowed language from Stowe, but not his preconceptions: (see next page)

- [S] It is not the words of the Bible that were inspired,
[W] *It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired,*
- [S] it is not the thoughts of the Bible that were inspired;
- [S] it is the men who wrote the Bible that were inspired
[W] *but the men that were inspired.*
- [S] Inspiration acts not on the man's words, not on the man's thoughts,
[W] *Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions*
- [S] but on the man himself; so that he, by his own spontaneity, under
[W] *but on the man himself who, under*
- [S] the impulse of the Holy Ghost, conceives certain thought and gives
[W] *the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts.*
- [S] utterance to them in certain words, both the words and thoughts
[W] *But the words*
- [S] receiving the peculiar impress of the mind which conceived
[W] *receive the impress of the individual mind*
- [S] and uttered them, and being in fact just as really his own, as they
could have been if there had been no inspiration at all in the case
Inspiration generally is a purifying, and an elevation, and an
intensification of the human intellect subjectively, rather than an
objective suggestion and communication; though suggestion and
communication are not excluded.
- [S] The Divine mind is, as it were, so diffused through the
[W] *The Divine mind is diffused. The Divine*
- [S] human, and the human mind is so interpenetrated with the
[W] *mind and will is combined with the human mind and will;*
- [S] Divine, that for the time being the utterances of the man
[W] *thus the utterance of man*
- [S] are the word of God.
[W] *are the word of God.*

—[S] Calvin E. Stowe, *Origin and History of the Books of the Bible*, 1867. pp. 19-20;

—[W] Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 21

Even this brief comparison shows that while employing Stowe's words, Ellen White does not whole-heartedly agree with what he is saying. She places more emphasis on the Divine aspects of the revelation-inspiration process than does Stowe. He denies thought inspiration; she affirms it.

Fred Veltman's conclusion of how Ellen White used sources in the writing of *The Desire of Ages*:

There is no question that she [Ellen G. White] used sources, but she was selective. She evidently was governed by her own purposes and priorities. The sources were her slaves, never her masters.

To deny her indebtedness to literary sources or to underplay their influence, would in my judgment not be a fair assessment of the evidence. . . . But to stress the literary borrowing to such an extent that Ellen White's special contributions as a writer and as a messenger, for the content she wished to communicate, are severely downplayed or denied, is also in my opinion an inaccurate evaluation of the evidence."—Fred Veltman, *Life of Christ Research Project*, p. 933.

D. Ellen White appropriated some of the doctrinal writings of her fellow workers, since they had developed their doctrinal concepts by mutual study.

When tracts and pamphlets were published, the expositions of truth therein presented frequently represented the results of united, concerted study, and the forms of expression by the several writers were very similar and sometimes identical. All felt that the truths to be presented were common property and wherever one could help another or get help from another in the expression of Biblical truths, it was considered right to do so. Consequently there were many excellent statements of present truth copied by one writer from another. And no man said that aught which he wrote was exclusively his own.

In the process of time many things which Sister White wrote and said were used by others without credit, and she in turn when dealing with prophetic exposition or doctrinal statements felt free to use without credit the statements and teachings of leading writers among the pioneers when she found in their writings the exact thought that she wished to present. . . . It is in the delineation in prophetic and doctrinal exposition that we find that she used the words of others or had closely paraphrased them.—R. W. Olson, *Brief Statements*, pp. 10, 19.

In her Introduction to *The Great Controversy*, first in 1888 and again in 1911, Ellen White acknowledged her borrowing not only from historians, but also from "those carrying forward the work of reform in our time" (p. xiv). She here appears to have in mind such writers as Uriah Smith, J. N. Andrews, and James White.—R. W. Olson, *101 Questions*, pp. 72, 73.

E. White Estate's inventory of known literary borrowing.

At the main office we have a complete set of Ellen White's published books. In them are marked all the places of which we are currently aware where something is borrowed or paraphrased from another source. The table that follows shows the percentages found

in each book. (*The Desire of Ages* is not included since it was exhaustively examined separately by Dr. Fred Veltman in his seven year study.

BOOK TITLES IN ORDER OF PERCENTAGE OF DOCUMENTED LITERARY PARALLELS

<u>Title</u>	<u>Parallel Lines</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	
Great Controversy, The (In quotes)	3241	15.11	
Great Controversy, The (Uncredited)	1084	5.05	2 over 10%
Sketches From the Life of Paul	1185	12.23	
Steps to Christ	196	6.23	1 from 5-9%
Acts of the Apostles, The	426	3.05	
Faith and Works	73	2.97	
Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5	638	2.82	
Messages to Young People	282	2.67	
Patriarchs and Prophets	543	2.28	10 from 1-4%
Selected Messages, book 1	235	2.03	
Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4	395	1.88	
Prophets and Kings	242	1.51	
My Life Today	126	1.33	
Life Sketches	58	1.00	
Welfare Ministry	73	.99	
Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8	82	.97	
Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3	177	.96	
Fundamentals of Christian Education	159	.91	
Education	71	.88	
Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers	127	.85	
Gospel Workers	99	.81	
Sanctified Life	17	.81	
Christian Service	60	.80	17 from ½ to 1%
Counsels on Stewardship	58	.80	
Ministry of Healing, The	98	.78	
Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7	56	.77	
Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing	26	.68	
Christ's Object Lessons	70	.60	
Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1	135	.60	
Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6	61	.51	
Child Guidance	61	.50	
Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students	64	.49	
Counsels on Health	83	.48	
Adventist Home, The	55	.41	
Temperance	25	.37	
Medical Ministry	34	.36	
Counsels to Writers and Editors	14	.34	13 less than 1/2%
Counsels on Sabbath School Work	13	.32	
Evangelism	50	.30	
Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9	18	.28	
Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2	42	.20	
Selected Messages, bk. 2	20	.17	
Early Writings	10	.14	
Counsels on Diet and Foods	15	.11	

Dr. Fred Veltman summarized the literary borrowing that he found in his exhaustive study of fifteen chapters from *The Desire of Ages* as follows: Thirty-one percent had some dependence upon other sources,* while sixty-one percent did not. The remaining balance was quotes from Scripture. See *Adventist Review*, September 22, 1988, p. 6.

*This thirty-one percent figure included everything from very loose paraphrase to a few more extensive verbatim parallels. “31% of the [fifteen] test chapters [studied] registered some degree of dependency. Most of the dependency fell into the category of Simple Paraphrase. Only 30 sentences, or on average of two sentences per chapter [studied] were considered Simple Verbatim. No sentence rated Strict Verbatim.”

—From Fred. Veltman’s preliminary report to Neal C. Wilson, 1985, p 8.

VI. Exploding A Myth

Ellen White was uneducated and it is a sign of her inspiration that she could write as she did.

It is unfortunate that the myth has grown up that Ellen White was an uneducated person. In terms of formal schooling, it is true that she was uneducated, but then so were Abraham Lincoln and most of his contemporaries, many of whom achieved greatness during their lives because of self-education. Ellen White’s experience as a co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, her extensive travels to Europe and the South Pacific, as well as over most of the United States, and her extensive reading made her a highly knowledgeable person by nineteenth century standards. Evidence of this can be seen in her popularity as a temperance lecturer among Christian temperance groups, her popularity as a speaker at Adventist gatherings, as well as her extensive writing of articles, books and letters.

Her literary assistants did improve her written materials as we have seen, but the idea that God miraculously transformed a highly uneducated woman into some person with the ability to write a book like *Desire of Ages* is unfounded. Under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, her abilities were enhanced by her own hard work over the years plus the further assistance of literary assistants. In short, God did not work a miracle when it came to Ellen White’s writing abilities. Rather, He allowed others the privilege and blessing of assisting Ellen White in preparing her writings before they were sent out.

VII. Conclusion.

Ellen White’s own claim about her writings.

In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of

light shining from the throne. It is true concerning the articles in our papers and in the many volumes of my books.—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 29.

W. C. White's teaching.

Regarding Mother's writings, I have overwhelming evidence and conviction that they are the description and delineation of what God has revealed to her in vision, and where she has followed the description of historians or the exposition of Adventist writers, I believe that God has given her discernment to use that which is correct and in harmony with truth regarding all matters essential to salvation. If it should be found by faithful study that she has followed some expositions of prophecy which in some detail regarding dates we cannot harmonize with our understanding of secular history, it does not influence my confidence in her writings as a whole any more than my confidence in the Bible is influenced by the fact that I cannot harmonize many of the statements regarding chronology.—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, pp. 449, I am submitting a very short report for 2001:

Warning sounded by W. C. White and Dores Robinson.

Her use of historical matter was a means to the greater end,—to bring into brief form the indisputable facts of history, so as to emphasize the thoughts revealed to her, and to lay the foundation for the understanding of future events. Truly it will be a great misfortune if any reader shall allow the question of her use of some passages from the writings of others, to blind his mind that he cannot appreciate the great truths which are invaluable to the church and the world today.—White and Robinson, *Brief Statements*, p. 12 [June 4, 1981, *Adventist Review*, insert edition]

Fred Veltman's conclusion at the end of his seven-year study of the *Desire of Ages* as stated in the last paragraph of his "Summary and Conclusions" chapter:

If there is one general conclusion generated from my countless hours spent in reading and studying her [Ellen G. White's] writings over the past seven years, it is this: Ellen White was above all a practical believing Christian. Her writings were written to inform and to build personal faith in and personal obedience to God's will as it comes to expression in His Word, the Bible. We may wish with all our hearts that she could serve us today as scientist or psychologist, as technician or theologian, or as conference or college president, but that is not to be. My firm conviction is that she was not nor can she be any of these for us. She was rather a woman of God, drawn by His Spirit to call us back to Himself, to His word and His ways, that living under the name of Christ we might glorify Him before those who know Him not.—Fred Veltman, *Life of Christ Research Project*, pp. 957, 958.

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