

Ellen White's Habit

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Thomas Paine, whose body has now moldered to dust and who is to be called forth at the end of the one thousand years, at the second resurrection, to receive his reward and suffer the second death, is represented by Satan as being in heaven, and highly exalted there. Satan used him on earth as long as he could, and now he is carrying on the same work through pretensions of having Thomas Paine so much exalted and honored in heaven; as he taught here, Satan would make it appear that he is teaching in heaven. There are some who have looked with horror at his life and death, and his corrupt teachings while living, but who now submit to be taught by him, one of the vilest and most corrupt of men, one who despised God and His law. [*Early Writings*, p. 89]

Thus spake **Ellen G. White**, self-proclaimed messenger of God and founding matriarch of the Seventh-day Adventist church in 1854. And although her paragraph on Paine is prefaced a sentence earlier with “I saw “ (implying that her opinion of him was received in a vision), her husband James White wrote and published a similar passage in his publication the *Adventist Review and the Sabbath Herald* a few month earlier (September 13 1853, p.74).

Both James and Ellen White were expressing an attitude common among conservative Christians, especially those who had been followers of William Miller and had anguished through Christ's failure appear as predicted—on October 22 1844. Two months after the “great disappointment,” seventeen-year-old Millerite Ellen Harmon of Gorham Maine, began having visions. Harmon's first two visions (in December 1844 and February 1845) convinced a small group of grieving Millerites that what really had happened on October 22, 1844, was that probation had terminated for “all the wicked world” (James White, *A word to the little flock*). As she explained the visions two years later to a friend and supporter Joseph Bates, Christ had left his intercessory

ministry in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary “as bridegroom to receive his kingdom” (the New Jerusalem) from God the Father in the most holy place. This idea was not original with Ellen Harmon White. But it was her vision-backed promotion of what was called the “shut door” doctrine, based on the bridegroom parable of Matthew 25 that convinced quite a number of disappointed Millerites that the door of mercy has closed forever on that portentous October in 1844.

By publishing her first two visions, Ellen Harmon began a writing career that spanned seventy years, nearly all of it under the name of Ellen White. She married her minister husband James White in 1846, less than a year after James had publicly rebuked in the October 11, 1845, *Day Star* two former friends he claimed had “denied their [shut door] faith in being published for marriage.”

Although Ellen White shared with Thomas Paine the urge to write and publish there were significant differences between them ideology aside. Unlike Thomas Paine Ellen White claimed in a 1906 that what she wrote in letters, testimonies, articles and “the many volumes of my books” were “what God has opened before me in vision the precious ray of light shining from the throne.” The next two paragraphs of the letter, or “testimony” are symptomatic of another difference between the writings of Tomas Paine and Ellen White.” What voice” she asked “will you acknowledge as the voice of God?” And eighteen of the next twenty lines of the letter are paraphrased, without permission or credit, from two paragraphs in Daniel March's book *Night Scenes in the Bible* (1870).

“Mrs. White from an ethical standpoint was indeed a plagiarist.” Wrote William Haynor twenty years ago in an unpublished paper for his denominational history professor E.K Vande Vere. “Mrs. White did not conform to the ethical standards of her day. I believe that this fact should be faced. Whether

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everyone else conformed or did not conform is immaterial. The fact still remains Mrs. White did not”.

Neither student Haynor or professor Vande Vere had any inkling in 1964 that the unacknowledged paraphrasing became as Ellen White's son William described in a private 1928 letter to Adventist historian L.E. Froom his mother's "habit." "Mrs. White was not a substantial borrower," wrote Haynor. He could not be blamed for his ignorance, any more than his teacher.

Nearly a generation would pass before anyone again labeled Ellen White a plagiarist, at least publicly. Long Beach Seventy-day Adventist Church pastor Walter Rea received nationwide attention in the early 1980's when he demonstrated that Mrs. White's use of other (mostly nineteenth century) authors was indeed a habit that lasted most of her seventy-year writing career. Rea and others over the past five years have irrefutably showed that this habit extended to all her writing formats (diaries, letters, testimonies, magazine articles, and books) and infiltrated all topics she addressed. And there were few topics on which she did not expound.

For those Adventist who have charted their lives by her counsel, it might be disconcerting to learn that even when she prefaced a statement with the authoritative "I saw" or "I was shown," what she was shown might well have been a passage from a nineteenth-century devotional writer. Passages have been found that purport to quote the words of her "angel guide" or more distressing yet the words of Christ himself speaking to her in a vision, and the words turn out to be taken from another author.

These findings do not combine happily with Mrs. White's claim in *Selected Messages* (vol.1) that "although I am as dependent upon the spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them ye the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless they be those spoken to my by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation."

Mrs. White did place quotation marks around the statements of angels who spoke to her during visions.

But it is curious to discover that during one vision, published in 1851, the angel spoke to her in modern English ("you," "Your"); while the angel in another vision printed in the same booklet speaks King James English ("ye," "thee"). Even more surprising is the angel who, in the same vision of June 27, 1850, addressed Ellen White as both "you" and "ye." (*Early Writings*)

Ellen White's claims are in the public record and open to scrutiny and comparison with her performance. In 1906, Ellen White claimed in *Selected Messages* (vol.1) "My commission embraces the work of a prophet, but it does not end there. It embraces much more than the minds of those who have been sowing the seeds of unbelief can comprehend." Referring in a letter to her own publications she wrote, "These books contain clear, straight, unalterable truth. ... The instruction they contain is not human production."

Ellen White had little patience with fence sitters where her authority and its source were concerned. "The visions are either of God or the Devil. There is no half way position to be taken in the matter." She said in a letter to Harriet Smith and J.N. Andrews "My work for the past thirty years bears the stamp of God or of the Devil" (*Testimonies to the Church* vol. 4.) The same absence of equivocation applied to her opinion of Thomas Paine's writings:

Satan dictated much of his writings, and it is an easy thing for him to dictate sentiments through his angels now and make it appear that they come through Tomas Paine, who while living was a devoted servant of the evil one [*Early Writings*].

Because Ellen White frequently and adamantly asserted that her "views were written independent of books or of the opinions of others" (Manuscript 7, 1867) it is reasonable to infer that she was responding in such quotes to questions raised about the sources of her inspiration.

Within two years of her first visions, Joseph Bates, who in 1863 co-founded, with Ellen and James White the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, had

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inquired by letter (July 13 1847) whether Ellen “had light” on certain interpretations of Scripture related to the shut door before she saw it in a vision. Bates was curious because another post-disappointment Millerite, Joseph Turner, had published two different papers (in December 1844 and January 1845) attempting by reinterpretations of Scripture to explain the failure of Christ to appear on October 33 1844 in *The Advent Mirror*. Similar reinterpretations in Ellen (then) Harmon’s two visions, on December 1844 and February 1845, too closely paralleled Turner’s efforts to go unnoticed. Beyond that, Turner was a family friend of the Harmon’s; Ellen admitted to Bates that one of Turner’s papers “was in the house”. But she denied having “read a word in it.” Why? “I took no interest in reading, for it injured my head and made me nervous.” Later in this letter of explanation to Bates (July 13 1847) Ellen claimed that she “did not hear a lecture or a word in any way relating” to those most relevant doctrinal points regarding their recent disappointment.

A decade later, another Seventh-day Adventist pioneer, J.N. Andrews, encountered a similar coincidence. Andrews thought that he recognized the influence of John Milton’s epic poem about the origin of sin and mankind’s fall, *Paradise Lost*, in White’s “great controversy” vision of March 1858. Andrews approached her after a weekend meeting in Battle Creek, Michigan, at which she publicly described the panoramic vision. Arthur White, Ellen’s grandson, tells the story:

He told her some of the things she had said were much like a book he had read. Then he asked if she had read *Paradise Lost*. She replied in the negative. He told her that he thought she would be interested in reading it.

Ellen White forgot about the conversation, but a few days later Elder Andrews came to the home with a copy of *Paradise Lost* and offered it to her. She took the book, hardly knowing just what to do with. She did not open it, but took in to the

kitchen and put it up on a high shelf, determined that if there was anything in that book like what God had shown her in vision, she would not read it until after she had written out what the Lord revealed to her. [*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4].

Ninety-nine years later, Ruth Burgeson submitted as her master’s thesis for Pacific Union College a seventy-five-page study comparing Ellen White’s and John Milton’s descriptions of the fall. Burgeson wrote that “one is impressed by the similarity of actual content.... In fact the writer of this thesis found no disagreement between two authors...” “Of unusual significance” to Burgeson was “the correlations found in a number of instances where both authors depict with some detail an experience which is not found in the Bible.” After listing seven examples of this “correlation,” Burgeson pondered the question “Why are these two authors, living two hundred years apart, so much in agreement on major fact? Burgeson’s tentative conclusion was diplomatic:

An attractive and indemonstrable conclusion...is that both of these serious authors seeking to justify the ways of God to men were guided by the Holy Spirit whose aid they invoked.

The possibilities do not end there. Regardless of what she did with it—Arthur White says that according to his father William, his mother did subsequently read Milton—Mrs. White did receive *Paradise Lost* in the spring of 1858 and published her first and smallest volume of *The Great Controversy* in September of the same year.

At least as interesting as the Milton connection is Ellen White’s literary relationship to H.L. Hastings, a First day Adventist. During the time that Hastings and the Whites lived in Rochester, New York, James White published a three-part article by Hastings in the *Review and Herald* beginning December 19, 1854. Most interesting, however, is the fact that although Ellen White had her Lovett’s Grove, Ohio,

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“great controversy” vision on March 14, 1858, four days later (March 18 1858) James White published in the *Review and Herald* what former White Estate associate secretary Ronald D. Graybill considered “a glowing review of Hastings volume” *The Great Controversy Between God and Man. Its Origin Progress and End*.

Whether Ellen had read Hastings's *Great Controversy* cannot be proven; however, it may be assumed that James read it before reviewing it. Six months later Ellen White published her own *Great Controversy* between Christ and His Angels, and Satan and His Angels. Hastings's and White's books are both brief (about 150 pages each) and, according to Adventist historian Donald R McAdams, “remarkably similar.” Wrote McAdams in 1974 (*Ellen G. White and the protestant Historians*) “The two volumes have the same title, the same theme, the same beginning, and ending, and in fact interpret Scripture almost identically.” Graybill believes that “John Milton's epics stand somewhere in the background of both” books (*The Power of Prophecy*, p. XX).

Whether or not she was motivated by her own lifelong health problems, Ellen White became a health reformer and wrote extensively about the benefits—even the Christian duty—of temperate living. As with other topics, there were her claims and denials. In 1897 she wrote, in *Counsels on Diet and Foods*:

I have the great light from the Lord upon the subject of health reform. I did not seek this light; I did not study to obtain it; it was given to me by the Lord to give to others.

In her husband's *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* of October 8, 1867, (“Question and Answers,” p. 260) Mrs. White explained that it was on “June 6, 1863 that the great subject of health Reform was opened before me in vision.” The date of the article is important, for it was four years after the vision:

As I introduced the subject of health to friends...and spoke against drugs and flesh meats, and in favor of water, pure air and a proper diet the reply was

often made “You speak very nearly the opinions taught in the *Laws of Life*, and other publications, by Drs. Trall Jackson and others. Have you read that paper and those works?” My reply was I had not, neither should I read them till I had fully written out my own views, lest it should be said that I had received my light upon the subject of health from physicians, and not from the Lord.

In other written statement White answered similar queries by stating. “I had never seen a paper treating upon health “before the June 1863 vision. She added “After the vision was given me my husband was aroused upon the health question” (Manuscript 7 1867).

These 1867 denials by Ellen White are difficult to accept when it is realized that James White published several health related articles in his church paper during the six months preceding Ellen's June 1863 health vision. Medical historian Ronald L Numbers has described James White's own public stress on healthful living that began five months before the vision. In the February 10, 1863 *Review* “he called air, water, and light ‘Gods great remedies, preferable to doctors and their drugs.’” The next week's *Review* carried a front page article by Dr. James Caleb Jackson titled “Diphtheria, Its Causes, Treatment and Cure.” According to Numbers this was shortly after Mrs. White had successfully applied Jackson's treatment to her sons during their bouts with diphtheria. Numbers wrote: “The Jackson article ... spelled out the basics principles of health reform in tips on eating properly dressing sensibly, and breathing lots of fresh air....During the month of may [1863], James White continued to focus on hygienic living in the *Review and Herald* with a note from Dio Lewis on dress form and two extracts from Hall's *Journal of Health*, one urging a meatless low-fat diet during spring and summer, the other recommending two meals a day.” Yet Ellen White could write in 1867 (manuscript 7), “I had never seen a paper treating upon health. After the vision was given me my husband was aroused upon the health question.”

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James White, who served as his wife's editor most of the time until his death in 1881, also made claims and denials. In his autobiographical *Life Incidents* (published by Steam Press, Battle Creek Michigan, in 1868) he argued that Ellen's writings contained "many things... which cannot be found in other books" (p. 328). In his next sentence James provides as an example "her favorite theme, God in nature." But Mrs. White's best-known passage on God in nature is a close paraphrase of an apologetic digression against naturalism from a sermon by nineteenth-century Anglican clergyman Henry Melvill.

to the most intelligent readers and hearers. ... She could not have learned from books, from the fact that they do not contain such thoughts. [p.328, 329].

The discovery in recent years by a variety of Adventist researchers that Ellen White and her editorial assistants wove the writings of scores of authors into testimonies, articles, and books published over her byline calls into a question the integrity of both Ellen and James White. The White Estate recently made available for purchase on request a

Henry Melville, <i>Sermons</i>, pp. 295,296	Ellen White, <i>Testimonies</i> vol. 7, p. 259
<p>If our creed were to common forms of speech, it might be concluded that we regarded nature as some agent quite distinct from deity, having its own sphere, and its own powers, in an with which to work. We are wont to draw a line between what we call natural, and what supernatural; assigning the latter to an infinite power, but ascribing the former to ordinary causes unconnected with the immediate interferences of God. . . . We thus give energy to matter, and make a deity of nature? . . . to say that matter was . . . placed in certain relations, and then left to obey the laws . . . that matter was endued with certain properties. . . . and perform the revolutions originally impressed and commanded. This is . . . unscientific as it is unscriptural to contend.</p>	<p>In dwelling upon the laws of matter and the laws of nature, many lose sight of, if they do not deny, the continual and direct agency of God. They convey the idea that nature acts independently of God, having in and of itself its own limits and its own powers wherewith to work. In their minds there is a marked distinction between the natural and the supernatural. The natural is ascribed to ordinary causes, unconnected with the power of God. Vital power is attributed to matter, and nature is made a deity. It is supposed that matter is placed in certain relations and left to act from fixed laws with which God Himself cannot interfere; that nature is endowed with certain properties and placed subject to laws, and is then left to itself to obey these laws and perform the work originally commanded. This is false science; there is nothing in the word of God to sustain it.</p>

James White dug a deeper hole for himself and Ellen in his next paragraph:

If commentators and theological writer generally had seen these gems of thought...and had been brought out in print, all ministers in the land could have read them. These men gather thoughts from books, and as Mrs. W. has written and spoken a hundred things, as they are beautiful and harmonious, which cannot be found in the writings of others, they are new

document comparing eighty-five pages of parallel passages between Mrs. White and Henry Melvill alone.

From the time of her first vision in 1844 until her death in 1915, the image grew that Ellen White was often shown in vision the private sins of individual church members. To these stumbling ones she would write testimonies of condemnation, reproof, correction, and/or encouragement – depending on her perception of the testimony recipient's need. But throughout her life there were periodically those who, by association with her and personal knowledge of

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individuals to whom she had sent testimonies, came to doubt or disbelieve the source Ellen White claimed for her information. This is known because a few of these doubters felt constrained to publish the reason for their disenchantment.

Not one in a thousand Adventists will recognize such names as Isaac Welcome, Gilbert Cranmer, B.F. Snook, W.H. Brinkerhoff, Miles Grant, Lucinda Burdick, and H.E. Carver. Carver published a book about Ellen White in 1870 (*Mrs. White Claim To Divine Inspiration Examined*) describing among other stumbling blocks to his faith “two instances in which she claimed to see in vision things that I had communicated to her myself.” These instances, Carver explained were “not calculated to strengthen my confidence in the visions.” Nevertheless, throughout the last half of the nineteenth-century, the larger-than-life images of Ellen White grew. The Adventist community was self-purging. Those like Carver and, best known to Adventists, D.M. Canright, who became disenchanted through direct experience with Mrs. White usually left the church. Only a handful paused in an effort to illustrate reality's rough edges to others. Fewer still set up perimeters of their own from which to launch ineffective mortar strikes.

The attacks of embittered ex-Adventists often had the paradoxical effect of strengthening the belief of the faithful in Ellen White's inspiration. When they heard from or about her critics, they would knowingly quote Mrs. White:

Soon every possible effort will be made to discount and pervert the testimonies of God's Spirit. We must have in readiness the clear, straight messages that since 1846 have been coming to God's people. [*Selected Messages*, vol. 1]

It matters little that her warning was related to challenges to her authority contemporary with the statement. When Adventist scholars raise probing questions, backed by careful research sixty years after her death, White's staunchest followers see the quote a prophecy regarding those Adventist

academics trained in liberal, non-Christian institutions of higher learning and infected, presumably, with the presuppositions of secular humanism. Since these same “dangerous” professors teach in Seventh-day Adventist colleges, “Adventist Higher Education” has come to be considered by those who would not even recognize the term—an oxymoron (To be liberally educated is necessarily to really be a Adventist, and vice versa.) Several North American Adventist colleges and, by turns, the two universities have suffered deeply because of this immaturity on the part of vocal and/or wealthy constituents.

Corporately, Adventism has been very shy about introspection, especially where Ellen White is concerned. In 1919 the church had a wonderful opportunity to mature. At a time when the church's administrative leaders included some of its best-educated minds, the denomination's religion and history teachers met with the administrators for several days of candid conversation. Included were discussions of Ellen White's source usage, her errors and possible myths that had grown up around her. This representative group of knowledgeable Adventists largely agreed that the laity needed educating; but due to fear of reactionary Ellen White supporters, nothing was ever written publicly about the significant issues pondered so openly among scholars and leaders. Sixty years later (May 1979) stenographic transcript experts from the long-forgotten 1919 Religion and History Teachers Conference, located in the church's archives, were published without permission by a marginally tolerated Adventist quarterly journal called *Spectrum*.

It was during the 1970s that Adventist scholars focused their expertise on White's three main visions: the shut door, the great controversy, and health reform. Their findings spoke volumes about Ellen White's claim and denials. The reaction to their findings by church leaders said at least as much about “free inquiry” within Seventh-day Adventism: It is expensive.

In 1978, Ingemar Linden a Swedish Seventh-day Adventist and former Adventist Junior College and Seminary Bible and homiletics teacher published a

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book titled *The Last Trump*. It was a spin-off from his 1971 doctoral dissertation. While doing his research, Linden had elicited the pique of Ellen White's grandson, Arthur White, who was then director of the Ellen G. White Estate and a member of its board. Linden claimed in his book that Ellen White had taught the long-abandoned shut door doctrine based on her early (and later edited) visions. Worse, from Arthur White's perspective, Linden had buttressed his case by quoting from previously unreleased portions of a letter Ellen White had written to her friend Joseph Bates on July 13, 1847. In this letter she explained to Bates just how her first two visions had convinced some disappointed Millerites of the shut door, and that they had no duty after October 22, 1844 to rescue souls from damnation.

Arthur White did not want Linden to make available the embarrassing evidence. But once Linden had read the long-suppressed letter fragments, White could not deter him. Linden's book did not receive wide circulation because the Adventist book distribution system would not carry it. But through students, Linden's work, and probably even more through Whites's attempts to refute it, Adventist scholars and others students of Adventist roots became aware that church histories on Ellen White and the pioneers' seven-years relationship to the shut door had not only been wrong but, in some cases, perhaps intentionally so.

Linden's *Last Trump* was actually the third in a series of scholarly notes on Ellen White produced during the seventies. By 1974, then Andrews University associate professor of history Donald R. McAdams had scrutinized portions of Ellen White's third expansion of her book *Great Controversy*. His conclusions, published in *Ellen White and the Protestant Historians* were disturbing:

What we find when we examine the historical portions of the *Great Controversy* (those events from the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD through the French Revolution) is that entire chapters at the time are simply selective abridgments of protestant

historians. ... In the samples I have examined there is not one historical fact in her text that is not in their text. [pp. 16,17]

It was no longer simply a question of whether Ellen White had read John Milton's *Paradise Lost* before or after her 1858 great controversy vision. McAdams's 244-page comparison study was motivated by his desire to be able to respond definitively to his students when they asked "why the history in their assigned reading does not agree with the history they have read in *Great Controversy*."

In March 1974 McAdams sent Arthur White a copy of his completed study paralleling Mrs. White's handwritten draft of the *Great Controversy* half-chapter on Huss with her published version and James Wylie's nineteenth-century work on the same topic. The concerns McAdams expressed in his cover letter to White on March 29, 1974, turned out to be prophetic:

As you well know [Ellen Whites work] is a dangerous area for Adventists to study. This I consider to be a great tragedy. ... It is a bit discouraging to spend so much time on a project which is likely to be buried in a file drawer somewhere. ... I did this study because I wanted to get the truth. ... My hope is that it will actually change somebody's mind. The mind I would most like to change is yours. ... It would be very frustrating to me after all this work for the [White estate] trustees to read this, acknowledge that what I say is in the main true, and then simply bury it because "the Church is not ready for this yet."

After nearly four years of foot-dragging McAdams was allowed to share ten of Ellen White's sixty-four manuscript pages on the life of Huss and his analysis of it with a limited audience of fellow Adventist historians.

While McAdams's request was being ignored, the

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White Estate—especially Arthur White—had its hands full with the research requests of another young Adventist scholar, Loma Linda University history of medicine professor Ronald Numbers. While looking for material that would add interest to his classes, Numbers has perused a copy of L.B. Cole's *Philosophy of Health*, which had once belonged to Dr. John Harvey Kellogg. Numbers was intrigued by shorthand notes and page numbers, in the famous physician's own hand, scattered among the margins of the book. From "a volume by volume search" among Mrs. White writings on health, Numbers learned "what Dr. Kellogg had discovered three quarters of century before: a strikingly close similarity between Dr. Coles's language and Mrs. White's. This serendipitous discovery spurred Numbers "to undertake a through examination of Ellen White's development as a health reformer."

In Arthur White's nepotistic eyes, Numbers's research was an enormous threat. His findings were slated for a book about White's grandmother. Numbers planned to submit his manuscript to a secular publishing house; White wanted him to publish through the church. Numbers was writing as a historian, demonstrating Mrs. White's reliance on nineteenth-century health reformers, and he was asking the White Estate to release various unpublished Ellen White letters.

Numbers was successful in obtaining manuscript releases for most of the Ellen White letter fragments he requested, but there were several that Arthur White and the trustees refused to release. One example was an 1873 letter in which Mrs. White "describes a vacation trip to the Rocky Mountains in which she and the members of her family dined on wild duck." The quote was embarrassing because White had written so strongly against meat eating two years earlier (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2): "Those who digress occasionally to gratify the taste in eating a fattened turkey or other flesh meats pervert their appetites. . . . The lack of stability in regard to the principles of health reform is a true index of their character and their spiritual strength."

When *Prophetess of Health* was published by

Random House in 1976, it ended Ronald Numbers's work for the church. And yet four years later McAdams, by then a college president, could safely write in *Spectrum* (March 1980) that "Numbers' small volume, thoroughly researched and clearly written, was a first-class piece of historical scholarship and recognized as such in professional journals."

The derivate nature of Mrs. White's writings was forced into the open at the end of the seventies by Adventist pastor Walter Rea, who effectively threw himself beneath the wheels of the juggernaut by insisting that White's ubiquitous and unacknowledged source usage must be shared with the Adventist laity.

At Rea's request General Conference president Neal Wilson picked eighteen scholars from around the country to spend two days examining Rea's extensive examples of Ellen White's "borrowings." When the General Conference leaders rejected the panel's recommendation that "an in-depth study on the writing of *Desire of Ages*" (White's volume on the life of Christ) be undertaken by Rea and a person trained in scholarly methodology with whom Rea would be pleased to work," Rea applied himself seriously to the writing of his own provocatively titled book *The White Lie*. Rea dedicated his work, published in 1982 (M&R publications, Turlock, California), "to all those who would rather believe a bitter truth than a sweet lie."

Meanwhile the White Estate, now under the direction of Dr. Robert Olson, was deciding, internally, to borrow a scholar of its own choosing from the Adventist theological seminary at Andrews University to discover to the extent of Mrs. White's source dependence in *Desire of Ages*. Arthur White, who still maintained an office as well as his board position at the Estate, was deeply troubled by the plan and presented thirteen written concerns to the board. One of the primary fears was of source critical studies: "Are the [Andrews University] scholars trained in methods of research by universities known to have demolished faith in the Bible...capable of passing proper judgment in areas where absolute honesty in the acceptance of records and faith based on evidence are important factors?" White concluded

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by decrying the earlier scholarly efforts of Linden, Numbers, and McAdams.

Walter Rea, of course, was removed from the ministry of the Adventist church in 1981. Popular Adventist theologian Desmond Ford was also relieved of his college professorship and ministerial credentials within a year of a 1979 presentation made to the Pacific Union College chapter of the association of Adventist Forums, titled "The Investigative Judgment: Theological Milestone or Historical Necessity?"

Ford, while expressing faith in Mrs. White's prophetic ministry, insisted that the church's doctrine of the "investigative judgment" was not based on sound biblical exegesis. The investigative judgment was what the Adventist pioneers used to replace the shut door. The investigative judgment was a more sophisticated apologetic for Christ's nonappearance in 1844, and continues to find a place in the Adventist statement of fundamental beliefs. Ford, and a less vocal majority of Adventist theologians, wanted to bring it into harmony with the Bible. But the old guard, touting Ellen White as an inspired interpreter of Scripture, had the political horses, according to Raymond F. Cottrell in "The Sanctuary Committee and its New Consensus" (November 1980 *Spectrum*). Scores of Adventist pastors in North America and Australia have subsequently lost their positions because they were sympathetic to Ford's desire to be explicitly faithful to Scripture.

What makes honest inquiry so continually expensive in the Seventh-day Adventist church is the unthoughtful acceptance of Ellen White's extravagant claims. It is not possible to work in the Adventist ministry while promoting a revised image of Ellen White and her work, or call for doctrinal adjustments that are inconsistent with her scriptural interpretation. And it is no help, as Ford discovered, to show that Mrs. White sometimes gave the same pivotal Bible texts different interpretations at different times.

Church leaders, to a person, agree that Ellen White made mistakes; but they don't want any examples. White Estate associate secretary Ronald Graybill

provided too many illustration of the humanity of Mrs. White in his doctoral dissertation accepted by a Johns Hopkins University History Department committee in 1983, according to a review in the October 1983 *Adventist Currents*. Within months the board of Trustees voted him out of the White Estate. Linden, Numbers, Rea, Ford, Graybill, and others were axed for the mistake of talking in front of the children. Church leaders understand that their research does not just demonstrate the possibility that a prophet might prevaricate—they knew that from the Old Testament. Their findings suggest the possibility that the supernatural is not required to explain what so many have been led to believe was entirely miraculous.

Rather than an attack by a disgruntled Adventist, this is plea by a loyal member who prays that those who have participated in the long-standing cover-up will soon, with the help of the Spirit, disown their struthious apologetics. Because it is true of Seventh-day Adventism what Paul Johnson wrote about Christianity in general:

Christianity, by identifying truth with faith, must teach...that any interference with the truth is immoral. A Christian...historian, who draws the line limiting the field of enquiry at any point whatsoever, is admitting the limits of his faith.

Adventists and interested bystanders are left to ponder the curious correlation between the personal ethics of Ellen White and the harm they caused those who questioned them, and the good things that her life and work motivated her followers to accomplish:

1. - Ellen White and her fellow Adventist pioneers consistently rejected the doctrine of eternal burning torment for the lost.
2. - Her promotion of healthful living as religious duty have left Seventh-day Adventist males with a 6.2 year longer life expectancy than the general population—Adventist woman with a 3.1 year advantage.

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3. - Mrs. White's belief that the medical work was the "right arm" (*Saturday Evening Post*, March 1984) of the Adventist message led to the opening of 345 sanitariums and clinics around the globe.

These and more must be weighed against the blood of scholars and the pain of disillusionment faced by others whose eyes have been opened. No doubt the good could not have happened without her reifying claims—a fact that only reinforces Aldous Huxley's recognition that somehow humanity does better when it believes in God.

Thanks to the courage of Adventist scholars, today their brethren may have the unvarnished truth as well as the benefits. And it is nice to know that Tomas Paine may not have take dictation from Satan after all.