

ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 172
“Ellen White and the Future of the Adventist Church”
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GOOD NEWS ON MY LIVER CANCER RECOVERY

In my previous newsletter I gave an extensive report of the providential recovery from my colon cancer surgery and liver cancer treatments. You may have seen the image of the PET/CAT scan taken on April 24, 2007, showing how shows that the presence of cancer in my liver has been reduced by almost 80% after three treatments. To see the impressive color image of the PET/CAT scan, click on this link: <http://www.biblicalpherspectives.com/colon/>

Since then I have had two more treatments to deal with the remaining 20% of cancer cells in my liver. Next week, on May 29, I will take another PET/CAT scan to see if the remaining 20% of cancer cells have been eliminated.

One thing is sure. I feel like a new man, with an unprecedented surge of energy and a burning desire to praise God for restoring my health and for giving a new lease on life. I see this as an indication that God still has a work for me to do. To this end I want to with to dedicate the rest of my life.

How to Contact the Center for Cancer Care in Goshen, Indiana

To express my gratitude to God for leading me to this unique Center for Cancer Care, in Goshen, Indiana, I decided to forward the name, address, and phone number of any cancer patient contacting me, directly to Vladimir Radivojevic, a Seventh-day Adventist who serves as Assistant to the President. Vladimir has reassured me that he will go the second mile to help any cancer patient I will forward him.

During the past two weeks I received many appeals for help from cancer patients in different parts of the world. I have forwarded each message directly to Vladimir who is constantly confirming to me that he is personally contacting each patient.

If you or someone you know has cancer, feel free to forward to me their name, address, and phone number. The phone number is important, because it makes it possible for Vladimir to contact the patient immediately by phone.

What is unique about this Center for Cancer Care, is that they have a dozen of clinical studies on different forms of cancer. This means that they use different procedures not available in most hospitals. I contacted various Cancer Centers in Chicago, Dallas, Loma Linda, Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, Detroit, but none of them conduct clinical trial on cancer. All what they have to offer is chemo treatments. Chemo alone would hardly have eliminated most of my liver cancer cells.

Feel free to contact me by email at sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com or by phone at 269-471-2915. I will forward immediately your message to Vladimir who will do his best to put you in contact with one of the oncologists, able to help you.

UPCOMING SEMINARS FOR THE MONTHS OF MAY AND JUNE

Gradually I am rescheduling some of the invitations I had to cancel because of the colon cancer surgery and liver treatments. Here is a list

of the upcoming weekend seminars for the months of May and June:

MAY 11-12: UPLAND INDONESIAN SDA CHURCH

Location: The church is located close to Loma Linda, at 11100 Cedar Avenue, Bloomington, CA 92316.

For directions and information call Pastor Gary Strunk at 909-790-6042

MAY 25-26: MURRIETTA SPRINGS SDA CHURCH

Location: The church is located half way between Los Angeles and San Diego at 32477 Starbuck Circle, Murrietta, CA 92562

For directions and information call Pastor Lyndon Parsons at 951-313-1668.

JUNE 8-9: TYLER (TEXAS) SDA CHURCH

Location: 2935 S. Southeast Loop 323, Tyler, Texas 75701.

For directions and information call Pastor Elton DeMoraes at 903-258-5757

JUNE 15-16: LOS ANGELES: PASADENA SDA CHURCH

Location: 1280 E. Washington Boulevard, Pasadena, CA 91104.

For directions and information call Pastor David Recalde at 323 258 2827.

JUNE 29-30: ENGLAND - CHELMSFORD SDA CHURCH

Location: 43 Roman Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 OHA.

For directions and information call Elder Cliff Hilton at 01376 334 848

JULY 6-7: ENGLAND - TOTTENHAM W GREEN SDA CHURCH

Location: 253-255 West Green Road, Tottenham, London N15 SED

For directions and information call Elder Orville Baxter at 01992 621 599

NEW RELEASE OF PROF. JON PAULIEN'S LIVE VIDEO RECORDING OF *SIMPLY REVELATION*

Prof. Jon Paulien is one of the most respected Adventist scholars. Besides serving as the chairman of the New Testament at Andrews University Theological Seminary, he writes and lectures extensively in many

parts of the world. He is rightly regarded as a leading Adventist authority on the book of Revelation which he has taught at the Seminary for the past 20 years.

The constant demand for Prof. Paulien's CD albums with his publications and articles, led me to discuss with him the possibility of producing a live video recording of a mini Revelation Seminar, which he chose to call *Simply Revelation*.

The preparation of this video recording has taken several months. The *Simply Revelation* seminar consists of four one-hour live video lectures, which have just been recorded in the studio of Andrews University. An impressive virtual studio provides the background of the lectures. Each lecture is delivered with about 50 powerpoint slides. I have spent long hours looking for suitable pictures to illustrate the text of each slide in order to enhance the visual effect of each lecture.

In the first video lecture Prof. Paulien discusses the proper *method* to interpret Revelation. In the following three lectures he focuses on the essential *messages* of Revelation and their relevance for today. This mini Revelation seminar will offer you and your congregation fresh insights into the Book of Revelation.

Listening to the four one-hour lectures during the taping was an enlightening experience for me. I was spellbound by his profound insights into the meaning of the imagery of Revelation. He speaks freely without notes, out of the abundant knowledge derived from 20 years of painstaking research. For me it is refreshing to listen to a scholar like Prof. Paulien who knows what he is talking about.

The video editing of *Simply Revelation* is almost completed. This means that by the end of this month, May 2007, we expect to ship the new DVD album of *Simply Revelation*. The album has two DVD disks, each containing two live, video lectures illustrated with powerpoint slides.

You will be pleased to know that we are placing on a separate file all the powerpoint slides used for the live video presentation. Each slide has

the script of the live lecture. This means that if you are a pastor or a lay members who want to use Paulien's Seminar *Simply Revelation*, you can pick and choose the powerpoint slides that you like.

The file with the powerpoint slides is placed on Paulien's CD album containing all his publications. The reason is that there was no memory left on the DVD disks. In spite of my pleas, Paulien used the full 60 minutes for each lecture, leaving no space for the slides' file.

This has been an expensive project, both in time and money. The regular price of the DVD album is \$100.00, but you can order it now until May 31, at the pre-release price for only \$50.00. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.

If you have not ordered before the CD Album with Prof. Paulien's publications, we will be glad to add it to your DVD order for only \$20.00, instead of the regular price of \$60.00. This means that you can order both the DVD album with Prof. Pailien's four live video lectures on Revelation and the CD album with all his publications and powerpoint slides of *Simply Revelation*, for only \$70.00, instead of the regular price of \$160.00.

PRE-RELEASE OFFER OF PROF. PAULIEN DVD ALBUM

- **ONE DVD Album** of Prof. Paulien's four video lectures on Simply Revelation at the pre-release price of \$50.00, instead of \$100.00. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.
- **TWO DVD Albums** of Prof. Paulien's four video lectures on Simply Revelation at the pre-release price of \$70.00, instead of \$200.00. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.
- **ONE DVD Album of *Simply Revelation* and ONE CD Album** with Prof. Paulien's publications for only \$70.00, instead of the regular price of \$160.00. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.

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**“Ellen White and the Future of the Adventist Church”
Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.,
Retired Professor of Theology and Church History,
Andrews University**

The inspiration for this essay comes from the newly released edition of Prof. Graeme Bradford’s book *More than a Prophet* (May 17, 2007). The first printing of this timely book came off the press on July 6, 2006, and sold out in a few months.

About twenty Conferences donated the book to their workers. Several colleges have adopted the book for their classes. Many churches ordered the book for their members by the case of 30 copies for only \$5.00 per copy, instead of the regular price of \$25.00. The same offer is being extended on the new edition. See the details at the end of this essay.

In planning for the reprint of *More than a Prophet*, we decided to improve this timely book in two ways. First, by correcting the spelling mistakes and improving the sentence construction. For this task I wish to express my gratitude to three persons who helped me greatly in the editing process. Kenneth H. Wood, former editor of *Adventist Review* and chairman of the Board of the White Estate. He marked in his copy

the misspelled words and underlined those statements that needed some attention.

Prof. Jarrod Williamson, Ph. D., spent countless hours not only correcting misspelled words, but also offering valuable suggestions for improving the sentence construction. Karl Wagner offered me the corrected PDF version of *More than a Prophet* that has been posted online at the website sdanet.org/atissues. To enter all the proposed corrections has been for me a time consuming project. I wish to express my wholehearted gratitude to the three gracious brethren for their editorial help.

The second improvement is the three Appendixes that have been added. You will find very enlightening to read, for example, the Appendix A written by Robert W. Olson, Former Director of the White Estate. The title of the Appendix is “The Question of Inerrancy in Inspired Writings.” In a clear and concise way Olson lists some of the inaccuracies found both in the Bible and in Ellen White’s writings. Then he proposes how to deal with these problems in a constructive way.

Why Have I Invested My Time and Money in Publishing *More than a Prophet*?

The answer is simple. This study has helped me greatly to gain a balanced understanding of the prophetic ministry of Ellen White. I first read the manuscript *More than a Prophet* about 7 years ago. It was recommended to me by respected Seminary Professors. The study cleared my mind of numerous misconceptions.

Favorable evaluations by church leaders and scholars gave me reasons to believe that the manuscript would be published speedily, especially given the urgent need to restore confidence in the validity of the gift of prophecy manifested in the writings, preaching, and teachings of Ellen White.

Unfortunately, the manuscript was never published. Apparently the perception of some church leaders is that the manuscript may unsettle those Adventists who still believe that Ellen White received her messages like faxes from heaven (verbal inspiration). Eventually the manuscript was repackaged in an abbreviated and simpler version that was published in

two booklets *Prophets Are Human* and *People Are Human: Look at What they Did to Ellen White!* These two booklets were published by *Signs Publishing Company* in 2004 and 2006 respectively. They are written in a fiction-style, with a couple asking questions about Ellen White, and a pastor giving answers which are biblical and faith affirming.

Surprisingly the White Estate attempted without success to stop the circulation of these two booklets, because of their perception that they may weaken the confidence of those Adventists who still believe in the verbal inspiration of Ellen White. Such a view runs contrary to the very teachings of Ellen White who explains in *Selected Messages* vol 1, pages 15-21, that “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. . . .

“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” (*MP* 171). It is unfortunate that these clear statements from Ellen White did not become generally available until *Selected Messages* was printed in 1958.

The two booklets are now available in ABCs in Australia, New Zealand and North America. Pacific Press distributes them in North America. While two booklets have a popular appeal and will serve a useful purpose, my experience has been that an increasing number of Adventists prefer to put their teeth into a substantive study that examines questions in an objective and deeper way. This conviction motivated me to ask Prof. Bradford permission to publish the unabridged manuscript, as part of the *Biblical Perspectives* series. He enthusiastically accepted my proposal.

Words fail to express my appreciation to Prof. Bradford for allowing *Biblical Perspectives* (my publishing venture) to publish *More than a Prophet*. This book has been long overdue and is helping greatly in restoring confidence in the prophetic gift of Ellen White. Some former Adventist members and pastors who left the church because they found mistakes in Ellen White’s writings, told me that they would still be in the

church if this book had been available to them. Others are considering returning to our Adventist Church.

Who Is Prof. Graeme Bradford?

Dr. Graeme Bradford has served the Seventh-day Adventist church with distinction as a pastor, evangelist and professor in the theology department of Avondale College. He has conducted seminars in many parts of the world, helping thousands to better understand and experience biblical truths. At the time of the writing of this newsletter, he is in the USA to lecture in several churches, in addition to meeting with the Religion Faculty of Loma Linda University and the workers of the Southern California Conference.

To respond to the many attacks against Ellen White, Prof. Graeme Bradford spent twenty years of his life examining and digesting the writing of Ellen White in the light of the manifestation of the gift of prophecy in biblical prophets. By examining the human side of Bible prophets as revealed in scripture, Bradford shows that the problems they encountered, were not much different from the criticism brought against Ellen White.

More than a Prophet has been long overdue and will do much to restore confidence in the validity of the gift of prophecy manifested in the writings, preaching, and teachings of Ellen White—a woman who has left such a rich legacy not only for the Seventh-day Adventist Church but for the world at large. This book will help you greatly to gain a balanced picture of Ellen White—a woman who received divine revelations that shaped the message and mission of the Adventist Church, but also a woman who had human limitations.

To make it possible for many Adventists to benefit from this timely book, I am offering by the case of 30 copies for only \$5.00 per copy, instead of the regular price of \$25.00. The details to order the book are given at the end of this newsletter or you may wish to click at this link:

The Objective of this Essay

This essay looks at the pivotal role of Ellen White in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For the sake of clarity and brevity, this survey is divided in three parts, according to the significant characteristic of the influence of Ellen White during three major periods of Adventist history.

1) 1844 to 1915: Ellen White's Role in the *Consolidation* of the Adventist Message and Mission

2) 1915 to 1970: The *Glorification* of Ellen White

3) 1970 to our Times: *Reversion, Rejection, and Re-evaluation*

The ultimate goal of this essay is to show how Ellen White can continue to shape the *future* of the Adventist church through an honest use of her writings and respect for her prophetic authority.

This essay is largely extracted from Prof. Bradford's book *More than a Prophet*. In fact the page references are from the new edition of his book. The references are abbreviated as *MP*, which stands for *More than A Prophet*. My initial intent was to post a chapter from the book, as I have already done for newsletters no. 151, 152, and 155. The problem that I encountered is that none of the 27 chapters offer a survey of the past, present, and future role of Ellen White in the Adventist church. Each chapter deals with specific issues related to Ellen White. The information is very enlightening, but I thought our readers would benefit from an overview of the role of Ellen White in the past, present, and future history of our Adventist church.

What I am offering in this essay is not my original research, but mainly the highlights of Prof. Bradford's painstaking investigation published in *More than a Prophet*. I have also benefited from other studies, especially the books and articles by Arthur Patrick, Ph. D., a historian who has served for many years as Director of the White Estate Research Center at Avondale College. He has also lectured at Andrews University, La Sierra University, and Avondale College.

1844 to 1915: THE ROLE OF ELLEN WHITE IN THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE ADVENTIST MESSAGE AND MISSION

Ellen Gould Harmon White was born in a Maine farmhouse on November 26, 1827 and died in her California home (Elmshaven) on July 16, 1915. She lived longer than other co-founders and did influence most the shaping of the Adventist movement. During the 70 years of her prophetic ministry from 1844 to the time of her death in 1915, she guided the Adventist church in the development of its message and mission.

Between 1844 and 1863 she helped Adventist Sabbathkeepers to keep their Advent Hope alive and hold together as a movement. Between 1863 to 1888 she expanded the message and mission of the church, by including health, education, publishing work, and a global mission. Between 1888 and her death in 1915, she turned the attention of the Adventist church toward Christ, protecting the church from the dangers of legalism and pantheism.

Ellen White's counsel on publishing, church organization, health, education, global mission, and theological issues such as salvation and the Trinity, helped to shape the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church. She envisioned educational, medical, and publishing institutions that would express the Adventist values and help communicate our message to the world. Without her stabilizing prophetic influence, the Adventist church could hardly have become a world-wide movement of over 15 million members.

Why Adventists Accepted Her Prophetic Ministry?

Considering the fact that Ellen White was a diminutive woman, a mere five-feet-two inches tall with third grade formal education, one wonders how thousand of people, especially those who were closest to her, accepted her prophetic ministry. Prof. Bradford suggests 10 reasons:

“1. They saw that she was a true Christian.

2. They felt the power of her ministry in uplifting Jesus Christ, and in her calls for obedience to God and His Word.

3. When they were discouraged after the “Great Disappointment” of 1844 she was the one who kept their advent hopes alive.

4. In 1 Corinthians 14: 22-25, Paul declares that the presence of prophecy among God’s people is a sign to believers. It confirms the presence of God is with them. She was indeed able to reveal the secrets of the human heart. There could be no doubt that she had revelations in order to come by this knowledge. Over many years she sent out personal testimonies to individuals. Only a handful ever claimed they were irrelevant.

5. She gave them a sense of purpose and direction, a belief that God was still with them.

6. She expanded their concepts of mission to the world.

7. She gave them a sense of breadth and depth of mission to include health, education and welfare.

8. They witnessed her save the church from theological disaster at the hands of Kellogg, Waggoner and the Holy Flesh Movement.

9. When her counsel was followed, individuals usually prospered. When they failed to follow her counsel, things did not always prosper. Her messages and predictions were timely and practical.¹¹⁵

10. She saved the Church from Arianism by highlighting the true divinity of Christ” (MP 89).

Ellen White had her own weaknesses, which were known especially to those who were close to her. Prof. Bradford lists a sampling of six of them:

“1. She had some problems in her marriage. There were times when she and her husband worked apart.

2. She had problems with her children. She tended to favour Willie as the ‘good boy.’ James Edson, the only other of her four sons who survived to adulthood, turned away from the faith, but she won him back and he became a missionary to former slaves in the south of the United States.

3. She often became despondent over the criticism she faced. She could even doubt her own experience in Christ.

4. She could be forgetful.

5. She may not have always been as open about her use of other sources as she could have been.

6. She struggled to give up eating flesh foods and live up to the health counsel she had given to others” (*MP* 90).

These weaknesses did not undermine the confidence in her prophetic ministry, because she met the biblical test of a prophet, by uplifting Jesus and calling for obedience to the major doctrines of the Bible such as Creation, salvation, the deity of Christ, and His commandments. More important still, people could sense the spiritual impact of her preaching and writings.

The Experience of H. M. S. Richards

A fitting example is the experience of H. M. S. Richards. He had tremendous confidence in the prophetic gift of Ellen White because as a young man he heard her preach to about 5000 people just three years before she died. This is how he describes this experience: “Willie White led her out to the table where she was to speak. Just a little old lady in a black silk dress, with a little cap on her head. But, oh, when she started to preach there came one Bible text after another—at least 100 of them quoted right off just like that. She had no notes. She had her Bible but she never had to look at it but she would just keep turning the pages and quoting the texts. Her voice was like a silver bell as it carried out over that great audience. It started to rain; but above its din on the iron roof, you could hear that silver voice ringing out clearly through it all.

“When she had spoken about 45 minutes her son came out and said, ‘I think you are getting tired mother. You have talked long enough. I think you had better sit down.’ ‘No not yet I haven’t prayed yet.’ Then she began to pray and when she did something happened. Before that she was just a dear old lady, talking. But when she knelt down a great change came over the whole congregation. She was God’s prophet then and God honored her. Within 30 seconds we were all in the presence of God. I was afraid to look up lest I should see God standing there by her side. Within minutes you could hear sobs around the congregation”(*MP* 91).

Prof. Bradford notes that this “experience stayed with Richards the rest of his life. Later, when troubles over her writings erupted he never lost his confidence in her ministry. He always had a true biblical perspective of what to expect from a person manifesting the gift of prophecy” (*MP* 91).

During her lifetime, Ellen White was the most powerful single influence in the Adventist church. She blazed the trail that enabled Adventist pioneers to journey successfully through very difficult terrain. She led Adventism from a *Great Disappointment* to a *Great Certainty*.

1915 to 1970: THE *GLORIFICATION* OF ELLEN WHITE

The death of an influential church leader is usually of great significance. When Pope John Paul II died, many shouted at his funeral “Santo Subito,” that is, making him a saint rightaway. In the case of Ellen White the “glorification” process began soon after her death, partly as a reaction to a meeting known as “**The Bible and History Teachers Council,**” which took place immediately after the 1919 Bible Conference.

The Council was attended by 22 prominent church leaders such as A. G. Daniells, president of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference; G. B. Thompson, field secretary of the General Conference; F. M. Wilcox, editor of the *Review and Herald*, later *Adventist Review*; W. W. Prescott, former editor of *Review and Herald* and then a field secretary of the General Conference; H. C. Lacey, religion teacher at the Foreign Mission Seminary. Several other prominent church leaders were also present.

Ellen White Sought the Help of Respected Church Leaders

The verbatim report of the Council help us to see how Ellen White’s life and writings were perceived through the eyes of people who worked closely with her. An important question that was discussed at the Council was the need to explain to the church at large the help that Ellen White received in preparing her publications, the nature of her inspiration, and the legitimate use of her writings. Unknown to most Adventists even today, is the fact that Ellen White did seek the help of respected church leaders such as E. G. Daniells, W. W. Prescott, Uriah Smith, and J. N. Andrews, when writing on chronology and history

An example is a letter written to W. W. Prescott from Ellen White’s Secretary, Clarence C. Crisler. “In this letter he appeals to Prescott to come to give some help to Ellen White in the work of Ezra (which must

have been for writing the book *Prophets and Kings*). In this letter he makes a list of the problem areas they need help and then says at the end, ‘I am sure that Sister White would be specially pleased and cheered, if she could know that you were coming soon to help us over hard places.’” (MP 103).

Even in Ellen White’s day, not everyone knew about the assistance she received in writing her books. The result was that many Adventists believed her writings were verbally inspired and should be used as the final authority on any subject she wrote about. Some of the brethren who helped Ellen White in gathering information for her books, protested against this prevailing misconception and illegitimate use of her writings.

In a letter written on the year Ellen White died, W. W. Prescott, the leading Adventist educator of the time, who helped Ellen White in gathering information for some of her books, wrote to Willie White these startling words: “It seems to me that a large responsibility rests upon those of us who know that there are serious errors in our authorized books [Ellen White’s books] and yet make no special effort to correct them. The people and our average ministers trust us to furnish them with reliable statements, and they use them as sufficient authority in their sermons, but we let them go on year after year asserting things we know to be untrue. . . .

“The way your mother’s writings have been handled and the false impression concerning them, which is still fostered among the people have brought great perplexity and trial to me. It seems to me that what amounts to deception, though probably not intentional, has been practiced in making some of her books, and that no serious effort has been made to disabuse the minds of the people of what was known to be their wrong view concerning her writings. But it is no use to go into these matters. I have talked to you for years about them, but it brings no change. ***I think however that we are drifting toward a crisis which will come sooner or later and perhaps sooner. A very strong reaction has already set in.***” (MP 104; emphasis supplied). The warning of the last statement found fulfillment especially in the post-1970 period, when many Adventists left the church, claiming to have been deceived about Ellen White.

The 1919 Bible Conference After-Meeting

Prescott's concern was discussed at *The Bible and History Teachers Council*, that convened immediately after the 1919 Bible Conference. It is surprising to read some of the statements of respected church leaders and scholars. A transcription of their conversations has survived and was discovered on December 6, 1974, "when Donald Yost, the senior archivist at the General Conference headquarters in Washington, D.C. was setting up the newly formed archives. He accidentally discovered two packets of papers containing some 2400 pages of typewritten stenographic notes taken at the July 19, 1919 Bible Conference held in Takoma Park, Maryland" (MP 152). The impact of this discovery will be discussed shortly.

Reading the records of the discussions on the Spirit of Prophecy that took place on July 30 and August 1, 1919, I am impressed by the open and frank discussion of three major sensitive issues we still face today: (1) How to deal with the historical inaccuracies found in EGW's writings; (2) Should theological or exegetical differences be resolved by appealing to EGW's writings? (3) Should the laity be informed about the production and inaccuracies found in EGW's writings?

The discussions suggest that most Adventists believed in the verbal inspiration of Ellen White's writings. Church leaders feared that anything less than an inerrant view of Ellen White's writings, would bring protests. Thus, they chose to withhold from church members the truth about Ellen White's writings. For example, J. N. Anderson asks the question, "Is it well to let our people in general to go on holding to the verbal inspiration of the *Testimonies*? When we do that, aren't we preparing for a crisis that will be very serious some day?" (MP 104-105).

Similar views were expressed by other church leaders attending the Council. For example, A. G. Daniells, who had worked closely with Ellen White for over 30 years, first in Australia and then in America and who was serving at that time as President of the General Conference, said: "Well, now, as I understand it, Sister White never claimed to be an authority on history, and never claimed to be a dogmatic teacher on theology, like Mrs Eddy's book on teaching. She never claimed to be an authority on history... **she was ready to correct in revision such**

statements as she thought should be corrected. I have never gone to her writings, and taken the history that I found in her writings, as the positive statement of history regarding the fulfillment of prophecy.” (MP 153; Emphasis supplied).

Spiritual Value of Ellen White’s Writings

H. C. Lacey, a Religion Teacher at the Foreign Mission Seminary that later became Columbia Union College, expanded on A. G. Daniells’ comments, saying: “In our estimate of the spirit of prophecy, isn’t its value to us more in the spiritual light it throws into our own hearts and lives than in the intellectual accuracy in historical and theological matters? Ought we not take those writings as the voice of the Spirit to our hearts, instead of the voice of the teacher to our heads? And isn’t the final proof of the spirit of prophecy its spiritual value rather than its historical accuracy?” (MP 153).

W. C. Wirth, a Religion Teacher at Pacific Union College, proposed publishing a statement designed to refute the misconception of the verbal inspiration of Ellen White. He said: “I shall certainly be discredited if I go back and give this view. I would like to see some published statement given out by those who lead this work, so that if that thing should come up, there would be some authority back of it, because I am in for a lot of trouble on that thing. I would like to see something done, because that education is going right on, and our students are being sent out with the idea that the *Testimonies* are verbally inspired, and woe be to the man out where I am that does not line up to that. . . .” (MP 153).

G. B. Thompson, Field Secretary of the General Conference, admitted that ““If we had always taught the truth on this question, we would not have any trouble or shock in the denomination now. But the shock is because we have not taught the truth, and have put the *Testimonies* on a plane where she says they do not stand. We have claimed more for them than she did” (MP 154).

Statements such as these reveal that the process of glorification of Ellen White had set in. Most Adventists believed that Ellen White was verbally inspired and consequently inerrant in all what she wrote. To counteract this prevailing misconception, our church leaders and Bible teachers present at the Council, strongly felt that it was imperative to

inform church members regarding the production and inspiration of Ellen White's writings. With almost prophetic foresight they predicted that failure to meet this challenge would set the church "*drifting toward a crisis*" (MP 104). But unfortunately they were reluctant to act, fearing possible negative reactions. The opponents of the Council, capitalize on the reluctance of our leading brethren, to launch a concerted attack against them.

The Backlash to the 1919 Bible and History Teachers Council

After the Council, opponents of the views presented by Daniells, Prescott, and Lacey, organized a concerted attack against their views. Their goal was the *glorification* of Ellen White as an infallible guide for the Adventist Church. Two of them stand out in particular: J. S. Washburn, a well-known preacher; and C. E. Holmes who was the Washington correspondent for the denomination's *Southern Watchman* magazine.

On the basis of reports received secondhand, Washburn labeled the Council as the "Council of Darkness" and "Diet of Doubts." In a 36-page open letter, Washburn accused Daniells of seeking to destroy confidence in Ellen White's inspiration. This accusation is totally false, because Daniells reaffirmed his commitment to the prophetic gift of Ellen White in the book *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, which was published in 1936, just before he died.

Washburn also claimed that the views expressed at the Council were part of the Omega apostasy predicted by Ellen White: "In one of the most terrible warnings that God has ever sent to this people through the Spirit of Prophecy, on page 211, volume 4, of the *Testimonies*, 'Satan's chief work is at the headquarters of our faith.' Then the Omega must develop in Washington, for that is the headquarters of our faith. The Alpha centered and developed in Battle Creek, the old headquarters. The Omega must centre in the new headquarters, Washington, DC, the logical center, in harmony with the prophecy of Revelation 13th chapter, for the last struggle for truth and liberty. The Omega will develop and center in Washington, DC" (MP 155).

Similar views were expressed by C. E. Holmes in a track he had published. He wrote: "There is a dangerous doctrine that is rapidly

permeating the ranks of our people. I feel that it ought to be met and met squarely. It is this: that Sister White is not an authority on history. Some, as you know, go even further, and claim that she is not an authority on doctrine or health reform: That was practically the position taken last summer, and stands as a sort of unwritten law. During the Bible Conference in the summer of 1919 I heard it stated again and again by a number of our Bible and history teachers that Sister White is not an authority on history. If it were to go no further than these persons it would be bad enough, but think of the possibilities for evil when these men stand as teachers. These erroneous views will be poured into the receptive minds of our young people to undermine their faith in the Spirit of Prophecy and this message” (MP 155-156).

Ellen White Never Claimed to Be an Authority in History

Surprisingly Holmes ignored that Ellen White never claimed to be an authority in history. Note what Willie White wrote to S. N. Haskell (in a letter she signed at the end with the comment, “I approve of the remarks made in this letter, [signed] Ellen White): “Regarding Mother’s writings, she has never wished our brethren to treat them as authority on history. . . . When *Controversy* was written, Mother never thought that the readers would take it as an authority on historical dates and use it to settle controversies.” (MP 100).

Ellen White was aware of her limitations and invited readers to point out any incorrect statement they found, not only in *The Great Controversy*, but in other writings as well. In a draft copy of the second volume of *Spiritual Gifts*, she makes this comment: “A special request is made that if any find incorrect statements in this book they will immediately inform me. The edition will be completed about the first of October; therefore send before that time” (*Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 58).

In spite of Ellen White’s disapproval of the use of her writings as “authority in history,” to this very day some Adventists appeal to them to condemn historians like me for pointing out historical inaccuracies in *The Great Controversy*. In the newsletter no. 87 I discuss, for example, the inaccurate statements regarding the origin of Sunday in the fourth century and the alledged observance of the Sabbath by the Waldenses. It

is a known historical fact that Sunday observance began, not at the time of Constantine, but in the early part of the second century. Similarly, there are no sources indicating that the Waldenses were Sabbathkeepers. When I presented these historical facts, concerned brethren bitterly attacked me for failing to accept the “divinely revealed history” of *The Great Controversy*.

The Policy of Concealment Adopted After the 1919 Bible Conference

A. G. Daniells was so upset by the negative reactions of the ultra conservatives, that he did not even dare to circulate the minutes of the 1919 Bible Conference. They remained buried in the archives of the General Conference for the next 55 years. It appears that all the participants to the Bible Conference were also so intimidated by the extreme conservatives, that they chose to keep quiet.

An indication of the influence of conservatives is Washburn’s claim that his “Open Letter,” which was widely circulated before the 1922 General Conference, was largely instrumental in defeating Daniells’ bid for reelection to the General Conference presidency. This is altogether possible because at that time Adventists were influenced by the Protestant fundamentalist battle against liberalism and higher criticism. Any attempt to weaken the authority of Ellen White was seen in the light of the liberal trend to undermine the very authority of the Bible.

The policy of concealment adopted after the 1919 Bible Conference, remained in effect for the next 55 years until the minutes of the Conference were rediscovered in 1974. During this period the glorification of Ellen White as the supreme authority for faith and practice, continued unabated. She became the definitive encyclopedia to define the beliefs and the lifestyle for faithful church members. Her writings covered a full spectrum of issues of Adventist interest: diet, dress, education, health, sexuality, geology, chronology, stewardship, church organization, canvassing, and so on. The words “Sister White says” could guarantee the effective termination of most discussions. For some Adventists the same is true even today.

During this period a concerted effort was made to prove the inerrancy and originality of Ellen White. A fitting example is Francis Nichols' 703-page volume entitled *Ellen White and Her Critics*, published in 1951. Nichols attempted to minimize the human limitations and inaccuracies of Ellen White. For example, he devotes 125 to prove that Ellen White did not endorse the belief in the Shut Door and 17 pages to argue that she did not really mean to say that animals and humans amalgamated after the Flood. Nichols' denials have long been rejected by informed Adventists.

On the question of borrowing from other sources, Nichols tried to prove in his 64 pages response that Ellen White borrowed "only an insignificant part from other authors" and "if the little that she borrowed were deleted, it would scarcely affect the total of her writings, but more importantly, it would not affect the quality and the force of the message that is contained in her writings" (page 467).

In 1982 Robert Wieland went as far as to argue that the extend of Ellen White's literary borrowing was 0.002 per cent. This claim was compellingly discredited by a seven years comparative analysis of the sources used by Ellen White to write *The Desire of Ages*. The investigation was conducted by Fred Veltman, Ph. D., NT professor at Pacific Union College, and costed our church over half a million dollars. The result shows that about 31.4 per cent of *The Desire of Ages* is verbally parallel or similar to the sources Ellen White used. Beyond literary similarities, there are broader similarites of ideas which reflect the thematic development found in the sources.

The wall of defence built around Ellen White in the 1950s, began to crumble in the 1970s, as respected Adventist scholars began an objective investigation of her writings. For example, Ron Graybill, a research assistant in the White Estate, was asked to investigate the charge that Ellen White's account of the French Revolution in *The Great Controversy*, was based on unreliable sources which she used carelessly.

In studying the notes left by Clarence Crisler, Ellen White's secretary, Graybill found that Ellen White was not misusing sources at all. Instead, the problem was that she took the history of the French

Revolution straight out of Uriah Smith's *Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation*. She followed the lead of Uriah Smith who was a very poor historian.

Conclusion

The history of the period 1915 to 1970 can be characterized as the *glorification* of Ellen White by covering up her limitations and the material she took from other authors. A concerted effort was made during this period to prove the inerrancy of Ellen White. Her writings became the normative authority to define our beliefs and practices. Theological issues such as the nature of Christ during the incarnation, were debated on the basis of Ellen White's statements, rather than of Bible texts.

The policy of concealment adopted by ultra-conservatives after the 1919 Bible Conference, remained in effect for the next 55 years until the minutes of the Conference were rediscovered in 1974. Until this time the *glorification* of Ellen White as the supreme authority for faith and practice, continued unabated.

1970 TO OUR TIMES: REVERSION, REJECTION, AND RE-EVALUATION OF ELLEN WHITE

Ellen White's studies entered a new phase since 1970 as a result of the unprecedented developments which occurred during this period. The development of accredited educational institutions with graduate programs to train ministers and teachers. The establishment of an archival center at the General Conference headquarter and the creation of research centers in various geographical areas of the world. The maturation of well-trained historians such as Jonathan Buttlar, Everett Dick, Ron Graybill, George Knight, Gary Land, Don McAdams, and Richard Schwarts, all of whom sensed the need for a comprehensive reassessment of Adventist history, especially of the role of Ellen White in shaping Adventist beliefs and practices.

Until the 1970s most Adventists assumed that their church's beliefs consisted of a fixed body of doctrines which had been well-defined by Ellen White. A process of change began when Adventist historians and Bible scholars examined new found documents shedding light on the production of Ellen White's writings.

An accidental discovery occurred on December 6, 1974 when Donald Yost, the senior archivist of the General Conference, found two packets of papers containing some 2400 pages of typewritten stenographic notes taken at the 1919 Bible Conference held in Takoma Park, Maryland. “The subsequent publication of those minutes in *Spectrum*, gave Adventists a unique opportunity to see how some of the contemporaries of Ellen White viewed her function and authority. This was a world of thought that few, if any, of even the best-informed Seventh-day Adventists knew existed” (*MP* 152).

This discovery influenced Adventists scholars to examine critically Ellen White’s writings and share their conclusions. The result of this investigation was that Ellen White took material from other authors and was not inerrant in everything that she wrote. The significance of this conclusions can hardly be overemphasized, because Ellen White is so central to the thinking and living of Adventists. Her writings affect practically every area of Adventist teaching and practice. Thus, for Adventist scholars to suggest that Ellen White borrowed material from other authors, introduced an element of chaos into the very heart of Adventism.

The reactions can be characterized as *Reversion*, *Rejection* and *Re-evaluation*. Each of these attitudes is still present in our church today. For the sake of brevity, we offer only here only a brief description of these three positions.

The *Reversion* Position

Conservative Adventists feel deeply threatened by the massive amount of new information about Ellen White. They feel that the new research and discussion of Ellen White, is motivated by evil intent and should be prevented or discontinued. They tend to elevate an idealized past as normative for the present, promoting a strong continuity and identity with the past. For them the solution to the current conflicts, is a *reversion to the past*.

Reversionists wish to stop the process of inquiry and retreat into the safety of an idealized past. The documents that have been discovered are seen as the cause of unnecessary problems, causing people to doubt

the leading of the Lord. Probing questions are seen as evidence of lack of faith. They draw up inflexible lines of defense to protect themselves from unwanted “new light.” These judgmental groups tend to organize themselves on the fringes of the church and mount a guerrilla war, firing salvos at church leaders, scholars, and institutions.

An example of the reversion position is the newly released book on Ellen White entitled *The Greatest of all the Prophets*, by Russel R. Standish and Collin D. Standish. As suggested by the title, the book glorifies Ellen White as the greatest of all the prophets who ever lived. People like me who have pointed out some of the inaccuracies in *The Great Controversy*, are being attacked for failing to accept “the accuracy of Sister White’s inspired historical references in *The Great Controversy*” (p. 143). It is evident that the Standish brothers ignore that Ellen White never claimed to be an authority on history. We noted that she used available sources, especially the writings of Uriah Smith, who was a very poor historian.

The Standish go so far as claiming that the South Pacific Division is destroying confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy. “In 2004, under the guise of protecting the Spirit of Prophecy, the South Pacific Division has launched an eight pronged destruction of the Testimonies of God” (back cover of *The Greatest of all Prophets*).

Some of the *Reversionist* Adventist call themselves “Historic Adventists,” because they presume to stand for the original teachings of the Adventist church. For example, they reject the divinity of Christ because the early pioneers were Arians, that is, they believed that Christ is a divine creation, but not a divine being. It is unfortunate that these people fail to accept the theological growth of Ellen White and of the Adventist church as whole.

The Rejection Position

The polar opposite of the *reversion* position is *rejection position*. This position is adopted by Adventists who are unwilling or unable to incorporate the new facts about Ellen White into a coherent system. They claim that the new evidence exposes Ellen White and her teachings as a great deception, giving them a reason for rejecting her writings and leaving the Adventist church.

Any search engine on the internet shows thousands of websites attaching Ellen White as a false prophets. Under the heading of “Ellen White a False Prophet,” Google lists 620,000 websites. Surprisingly, many of these websites are by former Adventists who left the church because they believe that they were deceived about Ellen White.

A pastor told me that in the Loma Linda/La Sierra area the number of former Adventists outside the church, may equal the number of Adventists inside the church. I was made aware of this situation when I was invited to speak at the Riverside Seventh-day Baptist Church—a beautiful, new multi-million dollars sanctuary. I was suprised to discover that both the pastor and about 90% of the 500 members that attended my seminar were former Adventists.

When I asked several of them what caused them to leave the Adventist church, a common answer was: “We had problems with Ellen White.” They felt that they could no longer accept Ellen White as God’s inspired prophet, after they found that she was wrong in some of the things she wrote. They left the Adventist church because they could not participate in the deception that is going on, especially regarding Ellen White.

I have reasons to believe that at least some of these former Adventists would still be in the church, if they had they been given a correct understanding of how the prophetic gift functioned in the Bible and in the ministry of Ellen White. Prof. Bradford’s book *More than a Prophet* meet this urgent need, by compelling showing that prophets had divine revelations, but also human limitations that account for their inaccuracies. What is true for Bible prophets is also true for Ellen White.

The *Re-evaluation* Position

The *Reversion* and *Rejection* positions described above, illustrate a major problem facing our Adventist church today. Some members are claiming too much while others too little for Ellen White’s prophetic ministry. The *Reversionists* claim that Ellen White was given by God authoritative, detailed instructions on all aspects of our faith and practice. Unfortunately they have no way to come to terms with the new documents

showing Ellen White's use of sources and people in the preparation of her books.

By contrast, the *Rejectionists* deny Ellen White prophetic gift altogether, claiming that she is a fraud and a false prophet, because she used other sources and made mistakes. They forfeit the enduring value of her prophetic vision for our church today. Both positions lead to conflict and disillusionment at the end of the road.

The challenge facing our Adventist church is to develop a more faithful and balanced understanding of Ellen White's prophetic ministry, through a *Re-evaluation* of her prophetic ministry that acknowledges her divine revelations and human limitations. The *Re-evaluation* ought to include the following four elements:

1) Adventist Church Members Should be Told the Truth About the Production and Use of Ellen White's Writings

Our Adventist Church received a set back in the 1920s when it succumbed to the ultra-conservative Holmes—Washburn group who were committed to glorify Ellen White as an infallible and inerrant authority, by concealing how her books were produced. H. M. S. Richards acknowledges that what they did was wrong.

In his biography of H. M. S. Richards, Robert Edwards (once a member of the Voice of Prophecy Quartet) states: "Elder Arthur Daniells wanted to bring these things out in the open, but some of the more conservative leaders were afraid it would shake the faith of the people. Against the advice of Daniells, the General Conference president, they elected to keep the whole issue quiet (a decision Richards always thought was wrong. *It was his view that the Adventist people have a lot of common sense and can be trusted with the truth*). 'If they had opened the issue up in 1919, much of the trouble that plagued the church in the 60s would have been avoided,' he said. Richards recognized that Ellen White was a human being, subject to human frailties and mistakes. Even in her writings she sometimes made errors. . ." (MP 170; Emphasis supplied). I share Elder Richards's conviction that most Adventist have

enough common sense to handle the truth about Ellen White. The policy of concealment is counter-productive.

In recent years timid attempts have been made to re-educate Adventist members in their understanding of the production and function of Ellen White's writings. A major event was the 1982 *International Prophetic Guidance Workshop*, sponsored by the White Estate for church leaders and scholars.

Roger Coon, the Director of the White Estate, presented a paper where he urged to restore confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy by being totally honest and "admit the honestly made mistakes of the past." Prof. Bradford comments on this event, saying: "The workshop where this paper [Roger Coon] and others were presented was a high point in the church's attempt to come to grips with the reality of the problems regarding Ellen White and her function and authority. Unfortunately, what Coon and others were advocating was not effectively taken up. As in the 1919 conference, so in the 1982 conference. In both cases there was a determination to share the material with the membership at large, but in both cases the material was assigned to the too hard basket, with the feeling that the membership could not handle the new information. Consequently, the bulk of the Adventist membership has little knowledge of the information that has come to light over the past two decades and are left vulnerable when facing the evidence placed before them in a negative way" (MP 214-215).

Prof. Bradford's book *More than a Prophet*, is designed to meet this urgent need to restore confidence in Ellen White, not by concealing the truth about her writings, but by helping people understand the biblical expectations of a prophet. He shows that "Ellen White meets the biblical expectations of a true prophet, because she calls for holy living and obedience to God's Word. She upholds the good news about Jesus Christ and gives people a clearer understanding of what it means to accept and follow Him" (MP 215). Reading this timely book will help you discover the real Ellen White and give you a fresh appreciation for her prophetic ministry.

2) Adventist Church Members Should be Encouraged to Appreciate the Spiritual Contributions of Ellen White's Writings

Most likely those who are most critical of Ellen White, have not experienced the spiritual enrichment that comes from the devotional reading of her writings. For the past 25 years my wife and I have read faithfully every night for our devotion Ellen White's writings. A few times my wife bought a devotional book of the year written by a different author. We would use it for a few days, until we felt spiritual undernourished and picked up an old devotional book by Ellen White. There is no question in our mind that Ellen White meets our spiritual needs better than any other writer.

Ellen White offers profound theological insights in many areas. This is why I devoted a whole chapter to her teachings in my books *Wine in the Bible*, *Women in the Church*, and *Christian Dress and Adornment*. But it is important for Adventist to understand that the major contribution of Ellen White's writings is spiritual, not historical or theological. Most of her writings consists of *Testimonies*, that is, messages of exhortation, reproof and consolation. This is in harmony with the NT view of the gift of prophecy, which is said to be for "strengthening, encouragement, and comfort" (1 Cor 14:3).

At the 1919 *Bible and History Teachers Council*, Bible teacher H. C. Lacey, eloquently observes: "In our estimate of the spirit of prophecy, isn't its value to us more in the spiritual light it throws into our own hearts and lives than in the intellectual accuracy in historical and theological matters? Ought we not take those writings as the voice of the Spirit to our hearts, instead of the voice of the teacher to our heads? And isn't the final proof of the spirit of prophecy its spiritual value rather than its historical accuracy?" (*MP* 153).

Fred Veltman reaches the same conclusion after seven years investigation of Ellen White's use of other sources in writing *The Desire of Ages*. The General Conference invested over half a million dollars on this project. Veltman writes: "If there is one general conclusion generated from my countless hours spent in reading and studying her 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...* 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 be anyone 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*" (MP 219; Emphasis supplied).

It is unfortunate that all too often Adventists have used Ellen White, not as a spiritual guide, but as a final authority to settle historical, theological, and scientific questions. The failure to have a correct understanding of the spiritual and pastoral role of Ellen White, has caused many to leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Many others still in the church, have become indifferent toward Ellen White, because they cannot reconcile in their mind how an inspired prophet could make inaccurate statements.

3) Adventist Members Need to Understand that Prophets Make Mistakes

In Appendix A of *More than a Prophet*, you will find an informative article entitled "The Question of Inerrancy in Inspired Writings." The article is written by Robert W. Olson, who served for many years as Director of the White Estate in Washington D. C. The article begins with the question: Are there discrepancies in the Holy Scriptures? The answer is, Yes" (MP 237). He then proceeds giving a catalogue of contradictory statements found in the Bible.

Under the heading "Numerical and Chronological Problems," he writes: "Did 24,000 die in the plague as in Numbers 25:9, or was it 23,000 as in 1 Cor. 10:8? Did Solomon have 40,000 stalls for his horses (1 Kings 4:25) or was it 4,000 (2 Chron. 9:25)? Was Jehoachin eighteen (2 Kings 24:8) or eight (2 Chron. 36:9) when he began to reign? Did Ahaziah come to the throne at the age of 22 (2 Kings 8:26) or 42 (2 Chron. 22:2)? Was David the eighth son of Jesse (1 Sam. 16:10,11) or the seventh son (1 Chron. 2:15)? Was the period of the judges 450 years in length (Acts 13:20) or about 350 years, as would be necessary if 1 Kings 6:1 is correct?" (MP 237-238).

To these could be added the numerous discrepancies in the NT. For example, the Gospels do not agree even on the date of Christ's crucifixion. The Synoptic (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) tell us that Jesus was crucified on Nisan 15, that is, the day after Passover, while John places the crucifixion of Nisan 14, that is, Passover day.

In the second part of the article Olson turns to Ellen White, asking the same question: "Are there any discrepancies in her letters, articles, and books? The answer is, Yes. Mrs. White herself allowed for the possibility of mistakes when she wrote, "In regard to infallibility, I never claimed it; God alone is infallible. His word is true, and in Him is no variableness, or shadow of turning" (1 *SM* 31).

He then proceeds to list some of the errors in dates, description of Biblical events, and historical statements found in Ellen White's writings. For example, Olson writes: "In 3 *SG*, 301, Ellen White placed the tower of Babel before the flood. In 2 *SP* 183-184, she states that John the Baptist was dead when the events of Matthew 4:18-22 occurred, while in *DA* 245, she indicates that John was "languishing alone in the dungeon" at the time. In *PP* 134, she says that Chedorlaomer had four allies, while Genesis 14:1,9, states that he had only three allies. In 1 *SG* 58, Ellen White has the nails crashing through Christ's "bone and muscle," but in *DA* 744 the nails are driven only through His flesh, in harmony with John 19:36" (*MP* 243).

To these could be added the historical inaccuracies that I have discussed at length in newsletter no. 87. You can access all my newsletters at my website www.biblicalperspectives.com

How should we deal with the inaccuracies found in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy? The sensible answer that Olson gives is that it is not necessary for us to have an inerrant Bible or Spirit of Prophecy books for God's purpose to be accomplished. "While we today freely admit that the frailties of humanity have entered into the writing of the Bible and the books we lovingly label as the "Spirit of Prophecy," we should not use these imperfections as excuses for questioning or rejecting the counsels of the Lord to us. If we do, we are the losers.

“God has spoken. He has spoken through vessels of clay. The divine oracles bear the marks of the human channel through which they have come to us. But these messages, both ancient and modern, also bear within them compelling evidence of their heavenly source. Let us listen” (MP 246). I fully concur with Robert Olson. Let us read the Bible and the writings of Ellen White, not looking for inaccuracies, but to learn about God’s Plan for our present life and future destiny.

4) Ellen White’s Writings Should NOT be Used to Stifle Biblical Research

Over the years Adventist scholars (including myself) have faced the dilemma of harmonizing the findings of their research with the Ellen White’s writings. On a few occasions I have been criticized for presenting conclusions that cannot be supported by the Spirit of Prophecy. The question that Adventist scholars have often faced is: To what extent are we free to pursue our research?

This question was already addressed at the 1919 Bible Conference by A. G. Daniells, who said: “The question is to what extent men are free to pursue an original investigation of the Scripture, and to follow the honest conclusions at which they arrive. I personally stand for liberty ... it looks to me as though we have another question to settle, and that is *whether we are a free people, in the matter of biblical research*, and in the matter of following the light that comes to us from such research” (MP 218; emphasis added).

Edward Heppenstall, a most influential Seminary Professor who married us on December 21, 1961, indirectly replies to A. G. Daniells’ question, saying: “Ellen White calls upon us to make sure that all the truths we hold are firmly established upon the Scriptures. Therefore we deplore the idea that anything else should have prior authority over the Bible. *Let her writings be our guide but not our jailer, our shield but not our straightjacket*. The Scriptures comprise God’s final word to us” (MP 218; emphasis added).

It is unfortunate that often Ellen White’s writings have been used as a straightjacket to stifle new original research. This has caused inner struggles

for Adventist scholars. For example, a highly respected Adventist biblical scholar, Hans LaRondelle speaks of his struggle: “As my knowledge of Scripture increased, I gradually awakened to my responsibility and duty to test Ellen White’s interpretations and applications of Scripture by the norm of *Sola Scriptura*. Over time this caused some re-evaluations of my unlimited confidence in her as the final interpreter of Scripture. I was forced to redefine the God-appointed function of her gift of prophecy. As Adventists, we do not stress any limitation to her prophetic gift. The result is that all her writings are easily taken as infallible, verbal inspiration by God for the remnant church, on equal level of authority as the Bible itself. . . . as an infallible interpreter of Scripture. . . . Never once did she suggest that her mission was part of the canonical ‘testimony of Jesus’ mentioned six times in the book of Revelation (1:2,9; 6:9; 12:17; 19:10; 20:4)!” (*MP* 217).

“It is ironic to think the Seventh-day Adventist Church should ever use her writings to determine who is orthodox in their teaching, when she wrote, ‘The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested’” (*GC* vii; *MP* 218).

Conclusion

Ellen White has played a pivotal role in shaping the message and mission of the Adventist Church. As a community of faith we cannot prosper unless we value the religious heritage we have inherited from the leadership and writings of Ellen White. All what our Adventist Church stand for today in terms of doctrines, global mission, healthful living, educational, medical, and publishing institutions, are largely due to the prophetic vision of Ellen White.

Unfortunately, our Adventist Church has not been always fair to Ellen White. We noted that for 55 years, from 1919 to 1970, ultra-conservatives attempted to glorify Ellen White by promoting her writings as the infallible authority to define Adventist beliefs and practices. This was achieved by concealing her human limitations and inaccuracies. The result has been that some Adventists have claimed too much while others too little for the prophetic ministry of Ellen White.

We noted that in recent years new documents and information has come to light regarding the production of Ellen White's books and the nature of her inspiration. At the 1982 *International Prophetic Guidance Workshop*, sponsored by the White Estate, appeals were made to restore confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy by being totally honest and "admit the honestly made mistakes of the past."

Unfortunately there has been reluctance to implement the proposals of the *Workshop*, for fear that the new information about Ellen White's writings, may unsettle the many Adventists who still view her writings as an infallible guide, verbally inspired by God. Such fear is unfounded, because Adventists are meant to be a free people that can freely go to the Scripture and seek for truth as did our founding fathers. The Adventist Church is not locked into traditional teachings like the Catholic Church. We are free to seek for biblical truths, not bound to venerate tradition.

My beloved Seminary Professor, Edward Heppenstall states this truth eloquently, saying: "Freedom belongs to man on religious grounds. Freedom is the gift of God. . . . The most troublesome thing is suppressed truth. It will not stay suppressed. . . . Religion that is afraid of investigation and scholarship tends towards superstition and emotionalism. . . . Blind credulity as to the truth one holds is the refuge of sluggish minds. It relieves the individual from the real study of God's word. It settles all differences by silencing all opposing voices and denying the right to ask questions. This takes the meaning out of religion, leaving it ignorant, superficial, intolerant ... The Christian possesses both love of the truth and love of his neighbour. As the man who is sure of his wife is free from jealousy, so the man who is sure of the truth he holds can afford to be courteous and tolerant with others... It is easier to abuse a man by charging him with error and wrong motives than to take time to find out what he actually does believe" (*MP* 202).

Ellen White has been the guiding light of the Adventist Church in the past, and can continue to guide our church in the future, if her writings are used judiciously for the intended purpose they were written. Such purpose is fittingly expressed in the tribute paid to her work at the 1990 General Conference Session: "Her inspired writings have been invaluable to the church throughout the world in countless ways—exalting the Bible as the inspired Word of God; encouraging Bible study; establishing the

faith of God's people in its promises; promoting a spirit of devotion and sacrifice; aiding in the development and organization of an international body of believers; expanding world outreach; providing guiding principles for the operation of publishing, medical and educational institutions; and guarding and unifying the church" (*MP* 220).

NEW EDITION OF BRADFORD'S *MORE THAN A PROPHET*

Have you enjoyed this newsletter on "Ellen White and the Future of the Adventist Church"? As I told you in the introduction, this content of this newsletter is distilled from Prof. Graeme Bradford's book *More than a Prophet*. As I have explained in the newsletter, this book is urgently needed to restore confidence in the prophetic ministry of Ellen White by telling the truth about her divine revelations and her human limitations.

The newsletter was meant to offer you what we Italians call the *Antipasto*, that is, the *Appetizer*. Now you are invited to enjoy the main course by reading *More than a Prophet*. To facilitate the distribution of this timely book among your church members, we are offering you two things:

- 1) Special discount on quantity orders of the book. Only \$5.00 per copy, instead of \$25.00 for a case of 30 copies.**
- 2) A FREE ALBUM of Prof. Bradford's DVD live two hours lecture on Ellen White. The DVD contains also a PDF file with all of Prof. Bradford's books and articles. The regular price of the DVD album is \$100.00, but you will receive it free with an order of 2 or more copies of *More than a Prophet*.**

The reason for offering a Free Album of Prof. Bradford's DVD live lecture on Ellen White, is to give your members the opportunity to enjoy the highlights of the *More than a Prophet*. After viewing the DVD, most members are eager to order the book.

SPECIAL OFFER ON *MORE THAN A PROPHET*

1 copy of *More than a Prophet* for \$20.00 (instead of \$25.00), plus \$5.00 for mailing in the USA, or \$10.00 for airmailing overseas.

2 copies of *More than a Prophet* plus the DVD album with Prof. Bradford's live two hours lecture on Ellen White, for \$50.00 (instead of the regular price of \$150.00). Add \$5 for mailing in the USA or \$10.00 for airmailing overseas.

30 copies of *More than a Prophet* plus the DVD album with Prof. Bradford's live two hours lecture on Ellen White, for only \$150.00, instead of the regular price of \$850.00). The price includes the mailing in the USA. Unfortunately as of May 14, 2007, the USA Post office no longer offer surface mail for overseas. Everything must be sent AIRMAIL. The cost for airmailing a case of 30 books, is \$145.00.

FOUR WAYS TO ORDER!

(1) Online: By clicking here: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/BradfordOffer/offer.htm>

(2) Phone: By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

(3) Email: By emailing your order to <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date.

(4) Regular Mail: By mailing a check to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

SPECIAL OFFER ON THE BOOK *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION? A BIBLICAL STUDY OF HUMAN NATURE AND DESTINY*.

The previous newsletter on "The Debate Over Human Nature and Destiny" generated many orders for my book *Immortality or Resurrec-*

tion? A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny. This timely book has been favorably reviewed by scholars of different persuasions. They acclaim this study as a much needed, breakthrough research that un-masks with compelling Biblical reasoning the great deception of conscious life after death.

Some Adventist scholars feel that this is the most important book I have written. You can read a sampling of comments from Adventist and non-Adventist scholars by clicking at this link <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/immortality/> At this link you will also see the picture of the book and read a description of its content.

What inspired me to write this book is the widespread belief in conscious existence after death which is taking today America by storm. This widespread deception should be of major concern to Bible believing Christians, especially Adventists, because it has fostered a host of heresies. For example, spiritualism, the communication with the spirits of the dead, the praying for the dead in purgatory, eternal hellfire, the intercession of the saints, the worship of Mary, indulgences, the mortification of the body to save the soul, the ethereal view of heaven where glorified souls spend eternity in everlasting adoration, are but a few of the many popular heresies that derive from the unbiblical belief in the immortality of the soul.

To meet the challenge of these heresies, I devote a full year of my life to a painstaking investigation of the Biblical teaching on human nature and destiny. My goal in writing *Immortality or Resurrection?* has been to challenge Christians of all persuasions to recover the Biblical wholistic view of human nature and destiny. The Bible teaches that the body and soul, the flesh and spirit, are not detachable components that come apart at death, but an indissoluble unity, created, redeemed, and ultimately restored by God.

This study will help you to understand how the Biblical wholistic view of human nature, affects our understanding of this present life and the vision of the world to come. This is a book you can give with confidence to friends interested to learn about God's plan for our present life and future destiny.

As a special bonus we are offering with *Immortality or Resurrection?* the CD album which contains all my 17 books, over 200 articles, and the slides and script of 22 powerpoint lectures. With the Acrobat search engine you can immediately locate all what I have written on any topic, including the subject of the state of the dead. The CD album regularly sells by itself for \$100.00, but you will receive it at a nominal price with the book.

SPECIAL OFFER FOR *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?*

- **One copy of *Immortality or Resurrection?* together with the CD album containing all my publications and powerpoint presentations for only \$50.00**, instead of the regular price of \$125.00.
- **Two copies of *Immortality or Resurrection?* together with the CD album containing all my publications and powerpoint presentations for only \$60.00**, instead of the regular price of \$150.00.
- **Ten copies of *Immortality or Resurrection?* together with the CD album containing all my publications and powerpoint presentations for only \$100.00**, instead of the regular price of \$350.00.

Four Ways to Order *Immortality or Resurrection? A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny*

(1) **Online:** By clicking here: <http://www.biblicalpherspectives.com/immortality/>

(2) **Phone:** By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

(3) **Email:** By emailing your order to <sbacchiocchi@biblicalpherspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date.

(4) **Regular Mail:** By mailing a check to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

SPECIAL OFFER ON THE 6 DVD/CD ALBUMS WITH ALL OF DR. BACCHIOCCHI'S LECTURES AND PUBLICATIONS

This offer may sound too good to be true, but it is true. Many have taken advantage of this incredible offer. To make it possible for many others to take advantage of this offer, I decided to extend it until May 31, 2007. You can order **the complete package of all my DVD and CD recordings, consisting of 6 Albums, for only \$100.00**, instead of the regular price of \$700.00. This is a one-time incredible offer.

You can see the picture of all the SIX ALBUMS and read a detailed description of them, just by clicking at this URL address:
<http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/holidayoffer.htm>

You can order **the complete package of 6 DVD and CD Albums for only \$100.00**, instead of the regular price of \$700.00, in four different ways:

(1) Online: By clicking here: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/holidayoffer.htm>

(2) Phone: By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

(3) Email: By emailing your order to <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date.

(4) Regular Mail: By mailing a check for \$100.00 to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

A NEW TOWNHOME COMMUNITY NEAR TO THE CAMPUS OF ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

If you are planning to move to Andrews University, you will be pleased to learn about a new Townhome Community being developed less than a mile away from the campus of Andrews University, by our

son, Danny Bacchiocchi. He is a gifted architect who has build prestigious homes on the shores of Lake Michigan and nearby.

This is a Townhome community designed around the needs of empty nesters, retirees or young professional families, who have no time to mow the lawn or shovel the snow. These services are provided to the community. You will like the open living area and the large windows. It is nestled in a peaceful setting, with easy access to downtown Berrien Springs and the campus of Andrews University. Feel free to come and visit the model home, while others are being build.

For a description and a picture of the Townhome Units, click at this link: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/danny>

INCREDIBLE NEW OFFERS ON HITACHI PROJECTORS

HITACHI has given us an additional discount on some of their projectors to help especially our churches and schools in developing countries. This is the special offer on the following three models:

CP-X260 HIGH RESOLUTION 2500 LUMENS - Only \$1095.00

Previous SDA price for the 2500 lumens was \$2395.00.

CP-X444 HIGH RESOLUTION 3200 LUMENS - Only \$1695.00

Previous SDA price for the 3200 lumens was \$3295.00.

CP-X1250 HIGH RESOLUTION 4500 LUMENS Only \$3795.00

Previous SDA price for the 4500 lumens was \$4900.00.

WARRANTY: The above prices include a 3 years 24/7 replacement warranty worth about \$285.00.

You can order the HITACHI projectors online by clicking at this link:

<http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/index.php?cPath=24>

If you have a problem ordering online, call us at (269) 471-2915. We will take your order by phone. Your order will be processed immediately.

THE SMALLEST AND MOST POWERFUL REMOTE PRESENTER

If you are looking for an outstanding REMOTE for your Power-Point presentations, you will be pleased to know HONEYWELL has just come out with the smallest and most powerful remote in the market.

The size of the transmitter is smaller than a credit card. You can stick it inside the palm of your hand and nobody can see it. I tested the remote in an open environment, and the radio signal can go up to 400 feet of distance. IT IS INCREDIBLE! The transmitter has three buttons: forward, backward, and laser.

You can order online the new POWERPOINT PRESENTER simply by clicking here: http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=27&products_id=67

If you have a problem ordering online, simply call us at (269) 471-2915. We will take your order by phone. You can also email us your order at <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>, giving us your address, credit card number, and expiration date.

DOES YOUR CHURCH OR SCHOOL NEED A SCREEN?

If your church/school is looking for a screen, the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY, the largest manufacturer of screens in the world, has agreed to offer their line of screens to our Adventist churches and schools at about 30% discount.

The procedure is very simple. Visit the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY website at <http://www.da-lite.com>. You will see hundreds of models of screens with their respective prices. Once you find the screen that you need, give us the model number by phone (269) 471-2915 or email your request <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com> We will forward your order immediately to DA-LITE that will ship the screen directly to your address. You will receive the screen at about 30% discount.

BED & BREAKFAST FACILITIES IN LONDON, ENGLAND

If your travel plans call for a stop in London, you will be pleased to learn about a most gracious Adventist couple that offer the best accommodation and breakfast I have ever enjoyed. It has become my home away from home when in London. See details at: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Promotions/BED&BREAKFAST.htm>

TAGNET SPECIAL NEW WEB HOSTING OFFER FOR ADVENTIST CHURCHES AND MEMBERS

TAGnet provides an incredible number of webhosting services to our churches and members. This newsletter comes to you through their gracious and efficient service. For detail information, visit their website at <http://www.netadventist.org> or <http://home.tagnet.org/> You may also call their office 800 - 9TAGNET. They are ready and eager to help you.