

Comments Regarding Unusual Statements Found In Ellen G. White's Writings

Introduction: Among the 100,000 pages of Ellen G. White's writings, some have pointed to several statements that are difficult to understand. A few of these statements are perplexing only because they have been lifted from their immediate contexts. Other statements pose problems for those who believe God's messengers are infallible, their predictions unalterable, and that their words and expressions are communicated verbatim by the Holy Spirit. Seventh-day Adventists believe that such views are incompatible with what is observed in Scripture. They are certainly counter to what Ellen White claimed for either herself or her writings. One may also find statements that seem to defy a ready explanation or lack current scientific confirmation. Regarding such, we are reminded of the following statement concerning supposed difficulties in the Scriptures:

"While God has given ample evidence for faith, He will never remove all excuse for unbelief. All who look for hooks to hang their doubts upon will find them. And those who refuse to accept and obey God's Word until every objection has been removed, and there is no longer an opportunity for doubt, will never come to the light" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 527).

Statements Taken Out of Context

"Those who accept the Saviour, however sincere their conversion, should never be taught to say or to feel that they are saved."

A closer look at Ellen G. White's cautions regarding this subject reveals that, in context, she is not speaking against the certainty of a believer's present standing with God. She is warning against the presumptuous "once saved, always saved" teaching of eternal security--those who claim "I am saved" while continuing to transgress the law of God. Here is her full statement:

"Peter's fall was not instantaneous, but gradual. *Self-confidence* led him to the belief that he was saved, and step after step was taken in the downward path, until he could deny his Master. Never can we safely put *confidence in self* or feel, this side of heaven, that we are *secure against temptation*. Those who accept the Saviour, however sincere their conversion, should never be taught to say or to feel that they are saved. This is misleading. Everyone should be taught to cherish hope and faith; but *even when we give ourselves to Christ and know that He accepts us, we are not beyond the reach of temptation*. God's Word declares, 'Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried' (Dan. 12:10). Only he who endures the trial will receive the crown of life (James 1:12)" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 155, emphasis supplied).

That Ellen White understood the proper basis for true Christian assurance is evidenced by the following remark she made before the church's General Conference session:

"Each one of you may know for yourself that you have a living Saviour, that He is your helper and your God. You need not stand where you say, 'I do not know whether I am saved.' Do you believe in Christ as your personal Saviour? If you do, then rejoice" (*General Conference Bulletin*, April 10, 1901).

To a woman who was struggling with doubts Ellen White wrote:

"The message from God to me for you is 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37). If you have nothing else to plead before God but this one promise from your Lord and Saviour, you have the assurance that you will never, never be turned away. It may seem to you that you are hanging upon a single promise, but appropriate that one promise, and it will open to you the whole treasure house of the riches of the grace of Christ. Cling to that promise and you are safe. 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' Present this assurance to Jesus, and you are as safe as though inside the city of God" (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 10, p. 175).

"I do not claim to be a prophetess."

Why does the Seventh-day Adventist church believe that Ellen G. White received the gift of prophecy when she said that she did not claim to be a prophetess?

The misuse often made of this Ellen White statement is an illustration of the importance of proper context. Here, in her own words, is what Ellen White did and did not mean by her statement:

"Some have stumbled over the fact that I said I did not claim to be a prophet; and they have asked, Why is this?

"I have had no claims to make, only that I am instructed that I am the Lord's messenger; that He called me in my youth to be His messenger, to receive His word, and to give a clear and decided message in the name of the Lord Jesus.

"Early in my youth I was asked several times, Are you a prophet? I have ever responded, I am the Lord's messenger. I know that many have called me a prophet, but I have made no claim to this title. My Saviour declared me to be His messenger. 'Your work,' He instructed me, 'is to bear My word. Strange things will arise, and in your youth I set you apart to bear the message to the erring ones, to carry the word before unbelievers, and with pen and voice to reprove from the Word actions that are not right. Exhort from the Word. I will make My Word open to you. It shall not be as a strange language. In the true eloquence of simplicity, with voice and pen, the messages that I give shall be heard from one who has never learned in the schools. My Spirit and My power shall be with you.'

. . .

"Why have I not claimed to be a prophet?--Because in these days many who boldly claim that they are prophets are a reproach to the cause of Christ; and because my work includes much more than the word 'prophet' signifies. . . .

"To claim to be a prophetess is something that I have never done. If others call me by that name, I have no controversy with them. But my work has covered so many lines that I cannot call myself other than a messenger, sent to bear a message from the Lord to His people, and to take up work in any line that He points out.

"When I was last in Battle Creek, I said before a large congregation that I did not claim to be a prophetess. Twice I referred to this matter, intending each time to make the statement, 'I do not claim to be a prophetess.' If I spoke otherwise than this, let all now understand that what I had in mind to say was that I do not claim the title of prophet or prophetess" (*Review and Herald*, July 26, 1906, reprinted in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 31-35).

"During the discourse, I said that I did not claim to be a prophetess. Some were surprised at this statement, and as much is being said in regard to it, I will make an explanation. Others have called me a prophetess, but I have never assumed that title. I have not felt that it was my duty thus to designate myself. Those who boldly assume that they are prophets in this our day are often a reproach to the cause of Christ.

"My work includes much more than this name signifies. I regard myself as a messenger, entrusted by the Lord with messages for His people" (Letter 55, 1905; quoted in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 35, 36).

Unusual Statements Regarding Scientific Issues

Amalgamation of man and beast

Some have charged that Ellen White wrote in 1864 (and republished in 1870) that humans once cohabited with animals and that their offspring produced certain races that exist today. The statement reads: "But if there was one sin above another which called for the destruction of the race by the flood, it was the base crime of amalgamation of man and beast which defaced the image of God, and caused confusion everywhere. God purposed to destroy by a flood that powerful, long-lived race that had corrupted their ways before Him." [\[1\]](#)

No dictionary has ever used "amalgamation" to describe the cohabitation of man with beast. The primary use of the word describes the fusion of metals, the union of different elements such as in making tooth cements. Nineteenth-century usage included the mixing of diverse races.

Granted, her statement could appear ambiguous: Does she mean "amalgamation of man with beast" or "amalgamation of man and of beast"? Often, repetition of the preposition is omitted in similar construction. [2]

On other occasions, when Mrs. White used the word "amalgamation," she used it metaphorically, comparing faithful believers and worldlings. [3] She also used it to describe the origin of poisonous plants and other irregularities in the biological world: "Christ never planted the seeds of death in the system. Satan planted these seeds when he tempted Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge which meant disobedience to God. Not one noxious plant was placed in the Lord's great garden, but after Adam and Eve sinned, poisonous herbs sprang up. . . . All tares are sown by the evil one. Every noxious herb is of his sowing, and by his ingenious methods of amalgamation he has corrupted the earth with tares." [4]

Recognizing that Satan has been an active agent in the corrupting of God's plan for man, beast, plants, etc., we can better understand what Ellen White may have meant when she described the results of amalgamation. That which "defaced the image of God" in man and that which "confused the species [of animals]" has been the handiwork of Satan with the cooperation of humans. Such "amalgamation of man and [of] beast, as may be seen in the almost endless varieties of species of animals, and in certain races of men," becomes understandable.

Mrs. White never hinted of subhuman beings or any kind of hybrid animal-human relationship. She did speak of "species of animals" and "races of men" but not any kind of amalgam of animals with human beings.

We recognize, however, that serious students of Ellen White's writings differ on what she meant by "amalgamation." "The burden of proof rests on those who affirm that Mrs. White gave a new and alien meaning to the term." [5]

For further study of this issue, see "[Amalgamation](#)" in the [Reference Library](#).

Notes

[1] *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 64. "Every species of animal which God had created were preserved in the ark. The confused species which God did not create,

which were the result of amalgamation, were destroyed by the flood. Since the flood there has been amalgamation of man and beast, as may be seen in the almost endless varieties of species of animals, and in certain races of men" (page 75).

[2] "We might speak of the scattering of man and beast over the earth, but we do not therefore mean that previously man and beast were fused in one mass at one geographical spot. We simply mean the scattering of man over the earth and the scattering of beasts over the earth, though the original location of the two groups might have been on opposite sides of the earth. In other words, the scattering of man and of beast" (Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, p. 308).

[3] "Those who profess to be followers of Christ, should be living agencies, cooperating with heavenly intelligences; but by union with the world, the character of God's people becomes tarnished, and through amalgamation with the corrupt, the fine gold becomes dim" (*Review and Herald*, Aug. 23, 1892; see also *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 144 and *The Upward Look*, p. 318).

[4] *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 288.

[5] Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, p. 308.

[Adapted from Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: the Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998), pp. 491, 492.]

Astronomical statements

Attention has been called to statements that seem to show that Ellen White made grievous errors regarding scientific issues. Prophets are not called to update encyclopedias or dictionaries. Nor are prophets (or anyone else) to be made "an offender by a word" (Isa. 29:21). If prophets are to be held to the highest standards of scientific accuracy (every few years these "standards" change, even for the experts), we would have cause to reject Isaiah for referring to "the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:12) and John for writing that he saw "four angels standing at the four corners of the earth" (Rev. 7:1).

Some point to the phrase, "As the moon and the stars of our solar system shine by the reflected light of the sun," charging that Ellen White was untrustworthy in scientific matters. [1] But most readers would recognize this use of "stars" for "planets of our solar system" as a non-technical description easily understood by laymen.

Some have declared Ellen White was in error when she allegedly said that she had visited a "world which had seven moons," [2] and that the planets visited were Jupiter and Saturn. In point of fact, she never named the "world which had seven moons." But there is more to the story.

Less than three months after she and James were married in 1846, she had a vision at the Curtis home in Topsham, Maine, in the presence of Joseph Bates. Although Bates had seen Ellen White in vision on several occasions, he still had doubts about her prophetic gift; but through the Topsham vision he was convinced that "the work is of God." [3] James White reported that, in this vision, Mrs. White was "guided to the planets Jupiter, Saturn, and I think one more. After she came out of vision, she could give a clear description of their moons, etc. It is well known, that she knew nothing of astronomy, and could not answer one question in relation to the planets, before she had this vision." [4]

What was it that convinced Bates, the old sea captain and amateur astronomer, that Ellen White was "of God"? After the vision, she described what she had seen. Knowing that she had no background in astronomy, Bates said, "This is of the Lord."

Obviously, what Bates heard corresponded to his knowledge of what telescopes showed in 1846. Almost certainly this vision was given in Bates's presence to give him added confidence in Ellen White's ministry. If she had mentioned the number of moons that modern telescopes reveal, it seems clear that Bates's doubts would have been confirmed. [5] (See ["Avoid Making the Counsels 'Prove' Things They Were Never Intended to Prove."](#))

Notes

[1] *Education*, p. 14 (same statement, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 465).

[2] *Early Writings*, p. 40. This vision was first described in the Broadside, *To those who are receiving the seal of the living God*, first published Jan. 31, 1849.

[3] *A Word to the Little Flock*, p. 21, cited in F. D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, p. 581.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 22. Ellen White wrote: "I was wrapped in a vision of God's glory, and for the first time had a view of other planets" (*Life Sketches*, p. 97; see also *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 83). No evidence exists that this is the same vision described in *Early Writings*, p. 40. See pages 144, 145.

[5] Further information regarding this 1846 vision is found in Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement*, pp. 257-260. For a discussion of how Loughborough's memory of his conversation with Bates many years earlier fits into this memorable moment for Bates, see Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, pp. 93-101.

[Adapted from Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: the Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, Idaho.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998), pp. 490, 491.

Death from cosmetics?

In an article describing unhealthful fashions, Ellen G. White included the following statement in an article regarding dangerous fashionable fads:

"Many are ignorantly injuring their health and endangering their life by using cosmetics. They are robbing the cheeks of the glow of health, and then to supply the deficiency use cosmetics. When they become heated in the dance the poison is absorbed by the pores of the skin, and is thrown into the blood. Many lives have been sacrificed by this means alone" (*The Health Reformer*, October 1871).

Some have wondered how the use of cosmetics alone could prove fatal. In today's world, with government testing and consumer safety guidelines, adverse reactions to cosmetics are essentially limited to skin irritation and allergies. But this was not the case in the 19th century, as noted in this consumer bulletin issued by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration: "The European cosmetic

known as ceruse was used faithfully--and fatally, because it was mainly white lead--by wealthy women from the second century until well into the 19th century to make their faces look fashionably pale" (Dori Stehlin, *FDA Consumer*, November 1991; revised May 1995).

In 1871, when Ellen White prepared the article in question, "enameling" was the latest cosmetic fad, "which is nothing less than painting the face with lead paint, and for this purpose are used the poisonous salts of lead" (Sara Chase, M.D. in *The Health Reformer*, October 1871, p. 125). Another deadly concoction was vermilion, made from mercuric sulphide. In such an environment, it is not surprising that Ellen White should alert her readers to the real life and health threats posed by such products.

Physical and spiritual dangers of masturbation or "self-abuse"

Few topics have generated more ridicule from critics than Ellen White's statements regarding "self-abuse," "solitary vice," "self-indulgence," "secret vice," "moral pollution," etc. Ellen White never used the term "masturbation."

Her first reference to this subject appeared in a 64-page pamphlet, *An Appeal to Mothers*, April 1864, nine months after her first comprehensive health vision.

Primarily devoted to masturbation, pages 5 to 34 were from her own pen; the remainder consisted of quotations from medical authorities. [\[1\]](#)

Ellen White did not say that all, or even most, of the potentially serious consequences of masturbation would happen to any one individual. Nor did she say that the worst possible degree of a serious consequence would happen to most indulgers.

Modern research indicates that Ellen White's strong statements can be supported when she is properly understood. The general view today, however, is that masturbation is normal and healthy.

Two medical specialists have suggested a link between masturbation and physical abnormalities due to zinc-deficiency. Dr. David Horrobin, an M.D. and Ph.D. from Oxford University, states:

"The amount of zinc in semen is such that one ejaculation may get rid of all the zinc that can be absorbed from the intestines in one day. This has a number of consequences. Unless the amount lost is replaced by an increased dietary intake, repeated ejaculation may lead to a real zinc deficiency with various problems developing, including impotence.

"It is even possible, given the importance of zinc for the brain, that 19th century moralists were correct when they said that repeated masturbation could make one mad!" [\[2\]](#)

More recent research has confirmed the critical role of zinc as a principal protector of the immune system, with a host of physical illnesses attributable to zinc-deficiency.

Two professionals in the area of clinical psychology and family therapy have compared Ellen White's statements on masturbation with current medical knowledge. [\[3\]](#) Dr. Richard Nies defended Ellen White's general counsel on masturbation, making four main points:

(1) Masturbation leads to "mental, moral, and physical deterioration. . . . It is not the stimulation, per se, that is wrong. It's what's going on in . . . [persons] when they're becoming self-referenced and self-centered."

(2) Masturbation "breaks down the finer sensitivities of our nervous system. . . . It is not difficult to see in terms of the electrical mediation of our nervous system, how disease becomes a natural result of individuals who have placed their own gratification at the center of their being. . . . Disease is the natural result of this."

(3) Masturbation is a predisposition that can be "inherited and passed on and transmitted from one generation to another, even leading to degeneration of the race."

(4) In dealing with others, especially children, Ellen White's counsel lies in the direction of dealing with the consequences, of showing them that we should be training for love and eternity, not self-gratification with its terrible consequences. Dr. Nies concluded his paper, "Self-gratification is synonymous with destruction."

Alberta Mazat observed that Ellen White's concern regarding masturbation was primarily on the mental consequences rather than the "purely physical act. She was more concerned with thought processes, attitudes, fantasies, etc." Mazat quoted Ellen White's references to the fact that "the effects are not the same on all minds," that "impure thoughts seize and control the imagination," and that the mind "takes pleasure in contemplating the scenes which awake base passion." Mazat further noted that some may be embarrassed by Ellen White's strong statements regarding masturbation. However, many of Mrs. White's other statements also seemed "unrealistic and exaggerated before science corroborated them, for example, cancer being caused by a virus, the dangers of smoking, overeating, and the overuse of fats, sugar, and salt, to name a few. . . . It seems worthwhile to remind ourselves that medical knowledge at any point is not perfect." [\[4\]](#)

Looked at from another perspective, God always upholds the ideal for His people through His messengers. However one reacts to Ellen White's specific counsel, clearly masturbation was not what God had in mind when He created man and woman, united them in marriage, and then instructed them to be fruitful and multiply. God's ideal in regard to sexuality is the loving relationship that exists in marriage between husband and wife. Anything else, including masturbation, falls far short of God's ideal.

Notes

[\[1\]](#) *An Appeal to Mothers* was reprinted in 1870 as part of a larger work, *A Solemn Appeal Relative to Solitary Vice and Abuses and Excesses of the Marriage Relation*. A facsimile reprint appears in the Appendix to *A Critique of Prophetess of Health* (by the Ellen G. White Estate).

[\[2\]](#) David F. Horrobin, M.D., Ph.D., *Zinc* (St. Albans, Vt.: Vitabooks, Inc., 1981), p. 8. See also Carl C. Pfeiffer, Ph.D., M.D., *Zinc and Other Micro-Nutrients* (New Canaan, Conn.: Keats Publishing, Inc., 1978), p. 45.

[\[3\]](#) Richard Nies, Ph.D. (Experimental Psychology, UCLA, 1964; equivalent Ph.D. in clinical psychology, including oral exam, but died during dissertation

preparation), Lecture, "Give Glory to God," Glendale, Calif., n.d.; Alberta Mazat, M.S.W. (Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, Calif.), Monograph, "Masturbation" (43 pp.), Biblical Research Institute.

[\[4\]](#) Mazat, Monograph, "Masturbation."

[Adapted from Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: the Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998), pp. 493, 494, with additional comments.]

Volcanology

Some charge that Mrs. White's statements regarding the cause of volcanoes reflected the myths and fanciful thinking of age-old theories. Her writings contain eight relevant concepts [\[1\]](#) that have been debated since they first appeared in 1864. [\[2\]](#)

This list includes: (1) Formation of coal beds is linked to the Flood; (2) Coal produces oil; (3) Subterranean fires are fueled by the burning of both coal and oil; (4) Water added to the subterranean fires produces explosions, thus earthquakes; (5) Earthquake and volcanic action are linked together as products of these underground fires; (6) Both limestone and iron ore are connected with the burning coal beds and oil deposits; (7) Air is involved in the super heat; (8) Deposits of coal and oil are found after the subterranean fires have died out. [\[3\]](#) Many theories abound as to the causes of volcanoes and earthquakes and the formation of oil and coal. Most earth scientists base their ideas on the plate-tectonic theory. Nothing in Ellen White's comments rules out that theory. Further, nothing in her writings states that *all* volcanoes are the product of burning coal fields or that *all* earthquakes are caused by subterranean fires. When she links earthquakes and volcanoes together, one immediately thinks of the Pacific Ocean "ring of fire" and its high potential for disasters from both.

However, notable scientists have confirmed Ellen White's observations. Otto Stutzer's *Geology of Coal* documented that "subterranean fires in coal beds are

ignited through spontaneous combustion, resulting in the melting of nearby rocks that are classed as pseudo volcanic deposits." [4] Stutzer listed several examples of such activity, including "a burning mountain," an outcrop that "lasted over 150 years," and "the heat from one burning coal bed [that] was used for heating greenhouses in that area from 1837 to 1868." [5] Modern confirmation exists for the igniting of coal and oil with its sulfur constituent "seen around the eruptions of hot springs, geysers, and volcanic fumaroles." [6]

References to rocks "which overlie the coal [and] have suffered considerable alteration because of the fires, being sintered and partly melted," correlate with Ellen White's statement that "rocks are heated, limestone is burned, and iron ore melted." [7] Further research in the western United States has produced conclusions and language very similar to Mrs. White's writings of a century earlier: "The melted rock resembles common furnace clinker or volcanic lava." [8] One last charge has been that melted iron ore is not found in connection with burning coal and oil deposits. However, a United States Geological Survey paper records the discovery of hematite (an iron ore) that had been "formed in some way through the agency of the burning coal." [9]

The suggestion that Ellen White was wholly dependent upon existing sources for her scientific information is without merit, because some of this verification only became known many years after her death. Further, "It is much more unlikely that she resorted to the published ideas of contemporary Creationists on the subject, since their views were relics of wild cosmological speculations." [10]

Notes

[1] See Warren H. Johns, "Ellen G. White and Subterranean Fires, Part 1," *Ministry*, August 1977, pp. 9-12.

[2] *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 79-80 (1864); see also *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 82, 83 (1870); *Signs of the Times*, Mar. 13, 1879; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 108, 109 (1890); Manuscript 21, 1902, cited in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 946, 947.

[3] Johns, "Ellen G. White and Subterranean Fires, Part 1," *Ministry*, August, 1977, p. 6.

[4] Otto Stutzer, *Geology of Coal*, translated by Adolph Noe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), pp. 309, 310, cited in *ibid.*, p. 19.

[5] Johns, "Ellen G. White and Subterranean Fires, Part 2," *Ministry*, October 1977, p. 20.

[6] *Ibid.* See also Thomas Gold, Professor Emeritus of Astronomy at Cornell University, "Earthquakes, Gases, and Earthquake Prediction" (1994), at www.people.cornell.edu/pages/tg21/Earthq.html

[7] Stutzer, *Geology of Coal*, p. 310; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 108, cited in Johns, "Ellen G. White and Subterranean Fires, Part 2," p. 20.

[8] E. E. Thurlow, "Western Coal," *Mining Engineering*, 26 (1974), pp. 30-33, cited in *ibid.*, p. 21.

[9] G. Sherburne Rogers, "Baked Shale and Slag Formed by the Burning of Coal Beds," *U. S. Geological Survey Professional Paper*, 108-A (1918), cited in *ibid.*, p. 21.

[10] Johns, "Ellen G. White and Subterranean Fires, Part 2," p. 22. "The coal mines of Germany have become a veritable gold mine in a study of Ellen White's scientific declarations, indicating the intermingling of the divine and human in a unique way" (*ibid.*).

[Adapted from Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: the Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998), pp. 492, 493.]

Wasp Waists Inherited?

Ellen G. White often addressed the subject of how practical Christianity relates to fashion. She pointed out the duty of dressing healthfully and not being a slave to the dictates of "style." Like other health reformers of her day, Ellen White protested vigorously against the unhealthy practice of "tight-lacing" associated with the wearing of corsets. She noted:

"The corsets which are again being generally worn to compress the waist is one of the most serious features in woman's dress. Health and life are being sacrificed to carry out a fashion that is devoid of real beauty and comfort. The compression of the waist weakens the muscles of the respiratory organs. It hinders the process of digestion. The heart, liver, lungs, spleen, and stomach, are crowded into a small compass, not allowing room for the healthful action of these organs. . . .

"By lacing, the internal organs of women are crowded out of their positions. There is scarcely a woman that is thoroughly healthy. The majority of women have numerous ailments. Many are troubled with weaknesses of most distressing nature. These fashionably dressed women cannot transmit good constitutions to their children. Some women have naturally small waists. But rather than regard such forms as beautiful, they should be viewed as defective. These wasp waists may have been transmitted to them from their mothers, as the result of their indulgence in the sinful practice of tight-lacing, and in consequence of imperfect breathing. Poor children born of these miserable slaves of fashion have diminished vitality, and are predisposed to take on disease. The impurities retained in the system in consequence of imperfect breathing are transmitted to their offspring" (*Review and Herald*, October 31, 1871).

Some have questioned Ellen White's credibility for suggesting the possibility that some women *may* have inherited small waists from their mothers--as if she were claiming divine revelation on this point. Her cautious, qualified assertion ("may have inherited") indicates that she was not claiming revelation here. Even if she was mistaken in her understanding on how some persons may have acquired their physical deformities, it does not gainsay the health principles she was advocating, or the wisdom of her counsel that women should abandon such unhealthful practices. (See ["Avoid Making the Counsels 'Prove' Things They Were Never Intended to Prove."](#))

Wigs and Insanity?

In the October 1871 issue of *The Health Reformer*, [1] Ellen White wrote of "hurtful indulgences" that militate against the highest interests and happiness of women. Among these "indulgences" she included wigs that, "covering the base of the brain, heat and excite the spinal nerves centering in the brain." As a result of "following this deforming fashion," she said, "many have lost their reason, and become hopelessly insane."

In the context of today's comfortable wigs, critics tend to ridicule this statement. But Mrs. White was referring to an entirely different product. The wigs she described were "monstrous bunches of curled hair, cotton, seagrass, wool, Spanish moss, and other multitudinous abominations." [2] One woman said that her chignon generated "an unnatural degree of heat in the back part of the head" and produced "a distracting headache just as long as it was worn."

Another *Health Reformer* article (quoting from the *Marshall Statesman* and the *Springfield Republican*) described the perils of wearing "jute switches"--wigs made from dark, fibrous bark. Apparently these switches were often infested with "jute bugs," small insects that burrowed under the scalp. One woman reported that her head became raw, and her hair began to fall out. Her entire scalp "was perforated with the burrowing parasites." "The lady . . . is represented as nearly crazy from the terrible suffering, and from the prospect of the horrible death which physicians do not seem able to avert." [3]

With reports such as this in the public press, it is easy to understand why Ellen White would warn women against the possible dangers of wearing wigs and trying to "keep pace with changing fashion, merely to create a sensation." [4]

Notes

[1] *The Health Reformer*, October 1871, pp. 120, 121.

[2] *Ibid.*, July 1867.

[3] *Ibid.*, January 1871.

[4] *Ibid.*, October 1871.

Unfulfilled Predictions?

England to Declare War During the U.S. Civil War?

Did Ellen G. White predict that England would declare war against the United States? Here is the context of her comment:

"England is studying whether it is best to take advantage of the present weak condition of our nation, and venture to make war upon her. She is weighing the matter, and trying to sound other nations. She fears, if she should commence war abroad, that she would be weak at home, and that other nations would take advantage of her weakness. Other nations are making quiet yet active preparations for war, and are hoping that England will make war with our nation, for then they would improve the opportunity to be revenged on her for the advantage she has taken of them in the past, and the injustice done them. A portion of the Queen's subjects are waiting a favorable opportunity to break their yoke; but if England thinks it will pay, she will not hesitate a moment to improve her opportunities to exercise her power, and humble our nation. When England does declare war, all nations will have an interest of their own to serve, and there will be general war, general confusion" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 259).

Note the conditional character of these statements: "She fears, *if* she should commence war abroad, that she would be weak at home." "But *if* England thinks it will pay." Then follows the sentence: "When England does declare war. . . ." It is evident that Mrs. White is here using the word "when" as a synonym for "if," which is good English. In fact, if we do not thus understand the word "when" in this connection, we have an unusual situation--a series of problematical "ifs" is followed by a simple statement that England is going to declare war. Thus Mrs. White's last sentence would make pointless her preceding sentences.

A similar use of the word "when" is found on the preceding page in her work: "When our nation observes the fast which God has chosen, then will He accept their prayers as far as the war is concerned." No one will argue that the word "when" in this connection introduces a simple statement concerning a future fact that will undebatably happen.

An inspired parallel to this "if" and "when" construction is found in Jeremiah 42:10-19. The prophet speaks to Israel about abiding in Palestine rather than going down into Egypt:

"If ye will still abide in this land. . . ." Verse 10.

"But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land. . . ." Verse 13.

"If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt. . . ." Verse 15.

"When ye shall enter into Egypt" Verse 18.

It is evident that the phrase "when ye shall enter into Egypt" is synonymous with "if ye shall enter into Egypt."

With the clause "when England does declare war," understood as synonymous with "if England does declare war," the statement changes from a prediction to a statement of mere possibility, but a possibility, however, whose full potentialities many might not realize.

[Adapted from Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, pp. 122, 123.]

Jerusalem Never to Be Rebuilt?

Ellen G. White wrote in 1851 that "old Jerusalem never would be built up." [\[1\]](#) By itself, the statement looks unsustainable. But when the setting is reconstructed, we find Mrs. White counseling the growing Adventist group that both time-setting [\[2\]](#) and the "age-to-come" notion [\[3\]](#) were incompatible with Biblical truth. She emphasized that the Old Testament prophecies regarding the establishment of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine were conditional on obedience and forfeited by disobedience. Unfulfilled prophecies would be fulfilled to "true Israel" as unfolded in the New Testament text.

Thus the popular movement of the 1840s and 1850s to promote a Zionist state in Palestine was not a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy and not a quest in which Adventists should become involved. Her warnings and instruction were designed to turn the interest away from Palestine and toward the work God had opened up before them.

In a September 1850 vision she saw that it was a "great error" to believe that "it is their duty to go to Old Jerusalem, and think they have a work to do there before the Lord comes. . . ; for those who think that they are yet to go to Jerusalem will have their minds there, and their means will be withheld from the cause of present truth to get themselves and others there." [4]

Less than a year later, August 1851, she wrote with greater emphasis "that Old Jerusalem never would be built up; and that Satan was doing his utmost to lead the minds of the children of the Lord into these things now, in the gathering time, to keep them from throwing their whole interest into the present work of the Lord, and to cause them to neglect the necessary preparation for the day of the Lord."

[5]

How did Ellen White's readers understand this statement? That there was no light in the popular "age-to-come" teaching, that there is no Biblical significance in the Jews' returning to Palestine, that Jerusalem will never be rebuilt in a future millennial period. She was not talking about a possible political rebuilding of Jerusalem but of a prophetically significant rebuilding of Old Jerusalem. To continue to think that way, she emphasized, was to sink further into Satan's deceptions and away from present duty.

For further study of this topic, see Julia Neuffer, "[The Gathering of Israel](#)," in the [Reference Library](#).

Notes

[1] *Early Writings*, p. 75. This sentence appears in the chapter, "The Gathering Time," which combined two visions and some additional lines. The first vision, Sept. 23, 1850, dealt with the "gathering time" of "Israel," the dates on the Millerite 1843 chart, the "daily," timesetting, and the error of going to Old Jerusalem. The second vision, June 21, 1851, focused on the third angel's message, time-setting, and Old Jerusalem's not being built up.

[2] Many former Millerites were setting various dates for the return of Jesus, with 1850 and 1851 being the latest dates for the end of the 2300-day/year prophecy. Although Sabbatarian Adventists generally were immune from time-setting,

Hiram Edson and Joseph Bates advocated 1850 and 1851, respectively. James White kept their views out of *Present Truth*, the *Advent Review*, and the *Review and Herald*.

[3] With several variations, age-to-come exponents, led by Joseph Marsh, O. R. L. Crosier, and George Storrs, believed that the Second Advent would usher in the millennial kingdom on earth during which time the world would be converted under the reign of Christ, with the Jews playing a leading role. This group closely related to the Literalists (British Adventists) who had believed that in the 1840s the literal Jews would welcome their Messiah (Christ) in Palestine, thus fulfilling Old Testament prophecies with Jerusalem becoming Christ's capital during the millennium. The majority of the Millerites had rejected this aspect of their Adventist theology, calling it Judaism. (See Josiah Litch, "The Rise and Progress of Adventism," *The Advent Shield and Review*, May 1844, p. 92, cited in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Students' Source Book*, p. 513. The first defectors from early Seventh-day Adventists were H. S. Case and C. P. Russell who had, among other concepts, embraced the "age-to-come" theory. See *The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Messenger Party."

[4] *Early Writings*, p. 75.

[5] *Early Writings*, pp. 75, 76.

[Excerpt from Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: the Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998), pp. 488, 489.]

Some in 1856 Alive When Jesus Returns?

Concerning a conference in 1856 Ellen White declared: "I was shown the company present at the conference. Said the angel, 'Some food for worms, some subjects of the seven last plagues, some will be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus.' " All who were alive then are now dead. Does this prediction mean that Mrs. White is a false prophet?

Numerous [statements](#) made by Ellen White in the decades following the 1856 vision demonstrate her clear understanding that there is an implied conditional quality to God's promises and threatenings--as Jeremiah declared--and that the conditional feature in forecasts regarding Christ's Advent involves the state of heart of Christ's followers. The following statement, written in 1883, is especially relevant on this point:

"The angels of God in their messages to men represent time as very short. Thus it has always been presented to me. It is true that time has continued longer than we expected in the early days of this message. Our Saviour did not appear as soon as we hoped. But has the Word of the Lord failed? Never! It should be remembered that the promises and the threatenings of God are alike conditional.

. . .

"It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed. God did not design that His people, Israel, should wander forty years in the wilderness. He promised to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there a holy, healthy, people. But those to whom it was first preached, went not in 'because of unbelief.' Their hearts were filled with murmuring, rebellion, and hatred, and He could not fulfill His covenant with them.

"For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years" (Ms 4, 1883, quoted in *Evangelism*, pp. 695, 696).

We can better understand Mrs. White's prediction of 1856 by examining it in the light of the conditional character of prophetic promises found in the Scriptures.

For further study on this topic see ["The Predictions of the 1856 Vision,"](#) in the [Reference Library](#).

Alleged Historical Errors

While many events of the past were shown to her, neither Ellen White nor her son ever claimed that every historical detail mentioned in her works was provided by the Lord in vision. Ellen White says that she used "facts" which were "well known and universally acknowledged." (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. xiii, xiv.) She wrote, for example, "In 1816 the American Bible Society was founded" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 287). There is no reason to believe that this type of information was supplied in vision.

W. C. White [Ellen White's son] states:

"The framework of the great temple of truth sustained by her writings was presented to her clearly in vision. In some features of this work, information was given in detail. Regarding some features of the revelation, such as the features of prophetic chronology, as regards the ministration in the sanctuary and the changes that took place in 1844, the matter was presented to her many times and in detail many times, and this enabled her to speak very clearly and very positively regarding the foundation pillars of our faith.

"In some of the historical matters such as are brought out in *Patriarchs and Prophets* and in *Acts of the Apostles*, and in *Great Controversy*, the main outlines were made very clear and plain to her, and when she came to write up these topics, she was left to study the Bible and history to get dates and geographical relations and to perfect her description of details" (*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 462).

In a letter to W. W. Eastman, W. C. White declared:

"When *Controversy* was written, Mother never thought that the readers would take it as authority on historical dates or use it to settle controversy regarding details of history, and she does not now feel that it should be used in that way" (*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 447).

W. C. White also wrote S. N. Haskell on the same subject, stating that:

"We will make a great mistake if we lay aside historical research and endeavor to settle historical questions by the use of Mother's books as an authority when she

herself does not wish them to be used in any such way" (W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, October 31, 1912).

In making her case for the future, Ellen White built not only on the revelations God gave her, but also on the records of the past. She made no attempt to write an authoritative history textbook. Rather, in the words of W. C. White, "The principal use of the passages quoted from historians was not to make a new history, not to correct errors in history, but to use valuable illustrations to make plain important spiritual truths" (W. C. White to L. E. Froom, February 18, 1932). [Excerpt from R. W. Olson, *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White*, pp. 48, 49. Available from the [Ellen G. White Estate](#).]

Apparent Discrepancies and Contradictions

Critics of Ellen White contrast certain of her statements which appear to contradict either herself or the Bible. Some of these "contradictions" are merely distortions of her words by the critics; others may be accounted for by the fact that the statement in question is only part of an idea more fully developed elsewhere in her writings. For a helpful review of such misrepresentations, see "[A Closer Look at: 'Ellen White Contradicts the Bible Over 50 Times.'](#)" But to attempt to prove that all the alleged "errors" in Ellen White's writings are not actually errors, is unprofitable for at least two reasons.

First, a person who looks for contradictions and errors in inspired writings will always be ready to supply new difficulties to replace those that have been removed. This has been demonstrated for centuries by those who take delight in looking for "mistakes" in the Bible.

Speaking of such, Ellen White wrote, "All the difficulties will not cause trouble to one soul, or cause any feet to stumble, that would not manufacture difficulties from the plainest revealed truth" (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 16).

Second, Seventh-day Adventists (including Ellen White herself) do not claim that either she or other inspired persons were infallible, either in their writing or living. Alleged discrepancies and factual errors are only fatal to views of inspiration that

demand perfection in human language and in the human instrument presenting the divine message. Such views run counter to what is observed in Scripture--the standard by which we are to judge our conceptions of how God speaks.

In evaluating so-called errors, one needs to consider whether the perceived "error" is central to the divine message, or inconsequential. Even when it is central, we need to allow for the possibility that the Holy Spirit may "correct" the prophet in a future communication. See 2 Samuel 7:1-17 for an example. If, in their prophetic teachings--those messages presented as revelation from the Lord--Ellen White or any other claimant were to be found contradicting the teaching of the Word of God, then such claims would fail the Biblical test "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

For further study, see ["Realize That Prophets Are Not Verbally Inspired, Nor Are They Infallible or Inerrant."](#) See also ["Infallibility: Does the True Prophet Ever Err?"](#)

"The Shut Door"

What is "the shut door" and what did Ellen White believe about it?

William Miller likened his message of the soon return of Jesus to the "midnight cry" of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). He interpreted the ten "virgins" as those summoned to meet the returning Lord, the "wedding" as the eternal kingdom, and the shutting of the "door" (verse 10) as "the closing up of the mediatorial kingdom, and finishing the gospel period"--in other words, the closing of the "door of salvation" or the close of human probation. According to Matthew 25:10, "The bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut" (Matt. 25:10).

Because they expected Christ to return at the close of the 2300 prophetic days of Daniel 8:14, Millerite adventists had emphasized that probation would close at the end of that period. Therefore, for a short period after the disappointment of

October 1844, Miller and many of his followers, including young Ellen Harmon (later Ellen White), felt that their work of warning sinners was finished for the world. While a majority of Millerites soon gave up their belief that prophecy had been fulfilled in 1844, a small group continued to hold that the time had been correct, but that they had been mistaken in the event expected. They were convinced that the movement was of God, that the 2300-day prophecy had been fulfilled, and that the "door" referred to in the parable was therefore shut-- whatever that might mean. Thus, to believe in the "shut door" became equivalent to believing in the validity of the 1844 movement as a fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

What is important to recognize is that the term "shut door" underwent a change in meaning among those who saw that the 2300-day prophecy referred to a change in Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. The "shut door" was seen as applying to the closing of the first phase and the opening of the second and final phase of Christ's intercession in heaven. It is erroneous to read into all of Ellen White's "shut door" statements the initial Millerite definition.

Ellen White maintained, and the evidence supports, that, while she and others believed for a time that no more sinners would be converted after 1844, she was never instructed in vision that the door of salvation was shut for the world.

Here is Ellen White's explanation of what she believed regarding the "shut door:"

"For a time after the disappointment in 1844, I did hold, in common with the advent body, that the door of mercy was then forever closed to the world. This position was taken *before* my first vision was given me. [Emphasis supplied.

Here Ellen White states that her visions were not the source of her belief in this Millerite error.] It was the light given me of God that corrected our error, and enabled us to see the true position.

"I am still a believer in the shut-door theory, but not in the sense in which we at first employed the term or in which it is employed by my opponents.

"There was a shut door in Noah's day. There was at that time a withdrawal of the Spirit of God from the sinful race that perished in the waters of the Flood. God Himself gave the shut-door message to Noah:

"My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years' (Gen. 6:3).

"There was a shut door in the days of Abraham. Mercy ceased to plead with the inhabitants of Sodom, and all but Lot, with his wife and two daughters, were consumed by the fire sent down from heaven.

"There was a shut door in Christ's day. The Son of God declared to the unbelieving Jews of that generation, 'Your house is left unto you desolate' (Matt. 23:38).

"Looking down the stream of time to the last days, the same infinite power proclaimed through John:

"These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth' (Rev. 3:7).

"I was shown in vision, and I still believe, that there was a shut door in 1844. All who saw the light of the first and second angels' messages and rejected that light, were left in darkness. And those who accepted it and received the Holy Spirit which attended the proclamation of the message from heaven, and who afterward renounced their faith and pronounced their experience a delusion, thereby rejected the Spirit of God, and it no longer pleaded with them.

"Those who did not see the light, had not the guilt of its rejection. It was only the class who had despised the light from heaven that the Spirit of God could not reach. And this class included, as I have stated, both those who refused to accept the message when it was presented to them, and also those who, having received it, afterward renounced their faith. These might have a form of godliness, and profess to be followers of Christ; but having no living connection with God, they would be taken captive by the delusions of Satan. These two classes are brought to view in the [first] vision--those who declared the light

which they had followed a delusion, and the wicked of the world who, having rejected the light, had been rejected of God. No reference is made to those who had not seen the light, and therefore were not guilty of its rejection" (*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 62-64).

For further study, see the following documents in the [Reference Library](#):

["Open and Shut Door" Article from the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*](#)

["The 'Shut Door' Documents," by Robert W. Olson](#)

Miscellaneous Statements

The Apocrypha

In a document titled "A copy of E. G. White's vision which she had at Oswego, New York," January 11, 1850, an unusual statement appears concerning the Apocrypha, also known as "the hidden book":

"I then saw the Word of God, pure and unadulterated, and that we must answer for the way we received the truth proclaimed from that Word. I saw that it had been a hammer to break the flinty heart in pieces, and a fire to consume the dross and tin, that the heart might be pure and holy. I saw that the Apocrypha was the hidden book, and that the wise of these last days should understand it. I saw that the Bible was the standard Book, that will judge us at the last day. I saw that heaven would be cheap enough, and that nothing was too dear to sacrifice for Jesus, and that we must give all to enter the kingdom" (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 16, p. 34).

If what we have is a correct copy of what she wrote, the meaning and significance of this statement is unclear. At no subsequent time did Ellen White make reference to the Apocrypha, call upon Adventists to study it, or urge its reading. Nor did she include this statement in any of her publications. Whatever one makes of the statement, it should be observed that the Apocrypha is not described as inspired, but is contrasted with the Scriptures which are called the "standard Book, that will judge us at the last day."

Extra-Biblical Descriptions

The question is whether later inspired writers may include added details about persons and events described in the Bible. Additions in terms of details, from one privileged to view in vision scenes of Biblical history, is no more surprising than the fact that one finds details mentioned by one Gospel writer that are omitted by another describing the same event. Paul identifies the Egyptian magicians by name (2 Tim. 3:8), whereas in the book of Exodus they are nameless. Jude describes a prophecy of Enoch (Jude 14, 15) that is nowhere recorded in Genesis. Similar insights by Ellen White complement the Biblical record, which remains the unique, authoritative, revelation of God's will.

God's Love for Erring Children

A few have wondered about certain expressions Ellen White used in some letters to her children in the early 1860s. In her tender love, she appealed to their souls in many ways. In 1860 she was speaking to children between ages 6 and 13. Trying to make the big picture clear in simple language, this 33-year-old mother used language at times that was more like theological shorthand, especially when she wrote that the Lord loves children "who try to do right" but "wicked children God does not love." [\[1\]](#)

Just as we must consider some difficult Biblical texts within the total Biblical context, we must do the same with Ellen White. For example, in Deuteronomy 7:9, 10, we note that God "repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face. Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them." In Psalm 11:5 we read, "The Lord tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates." By themselves such statements sound harsh, but when placed in the context of the whole Bible (including such texts as Isa. 1:18-20; Jer. 31:3; John 3:16, 17; John 14-17) their true meaning becomes clear.

Note the larger context of Ellen White's counsel to parents (1892): "Jesus would have the fathers and mothers teach their children . . . that God loves them, that their natures may be changed, and brought into harmony with God. Do not teach your children that God does not love them when they do wrong; teach them that He loves them so that it grieves His tender Spirit to see them in transgression, because He knows they are doing injury to their souls. Do not terrify your children by telling them of the wrath of God, but rather seek to impress them with His unspeakable love and goodness, and thus let the glory of the Lord be revealed before them." [2]

In other circumstances, she clearly made a difference between God's loving a person and endorsing what that person may be doing. [3] In clear theological terms, she set forth the fact that character determines destiny. Even a loving God will not refashion people's character after their death in order to redeem them. [4] Yet, how much theology can a six-year-old understand? God had the same challenge when He instructed the recently freed Israelites after their exodus from Egypt. He used kindergarten language and methods--including the sandbox illustration of the desert sanctuary service--for that was the only language level they could understand. Sometimes the threat of disapproval and punishment can get the attention of six-year-olds and recently delivered Israelites when "love talk" would have no impact.

Ellen White used both methods when dealing with her boys, apparently with good effect. The record contains numerous instances in which she talked to her sons about a friendly God, on many occasions praying with them about their spiritual growth. If young Ellen were to be confronted with a possible misunderstanding of her words, she would quickly say what, in substance, she would later write out more completely: "What I meant--and I believe what the boys understood--was that God will not condone disobedience, even though He always loves little boys and girls, good or bad. Disobedience has tough consequences, and God, in love, doesn't want them to experience the costs of disobedience." [5]

Ellen White did not always express her thoughts perfectly in her first attempt, and her later statement indicates that she found a better way to present both God's displeasure and His love.

Notes

[1] An example of letters from Ellen White to young, six-year-old Willie revealed her motherly attempts to keep him focused on cheerful obedience: "You must be a good, sweet, little boy, and love to obey Jenny [Fraser] and Lucinda [Hall]. Give up your will, and when you wish to do anything very much, inquire, Is it not selfish? You must learn to yield your will and your way. It will be a hard lesson for my little boy to learn, but it will in the end be worth more to him than gold."*

"Learn, my dear Willie, to be patient, to wait others' time and convenience; then you will not get impatient and irritable. The Lord loves those little children who try to do right, and He has promised that they shall be in His kingdom. But wicked children God does not love. He will not take them to the beautiful City, for He only admits the good, obedient, and patient children there. One fretful, disobedient child, would spoil all the harmony of heaven. When you feel tempted to speak impatient and fretful, remember the Lord sees you, and will not love you if you do wrong. When you do right and overcome wrong feelings, the Lord smiles upon you.

"Although He is in heaven, and you cannot see Him, yet He loves you when you do right, and writes it down in His book; and when you do wrong, He puts a black mark against you. Now, dear Willie, try to do right always, and then no black mark will be set down against you; and when Jesus comes He will call for that good boy Willie White, and will put upon your head a wreath of gold, and put in your hand a little harp that you can play upon, and it will send forth beautiful music, and you will never be sick, never be tempted then to do wrong; but will be happy always, and will eat of rich fruit, and will pluck beautiful flowers. Try, try, dear boy, to be good. Your affectionate Mother."* "By the blessing of God and his mother's instruction, Willie has overcome the impatient spirit which he sometimes manifested when quite young, and he now possesses a most

affectionate, amiable, and obedient disposition."--A.P.P.] (Ellen G. White, *An Appeal to the Youth*, pp. 62-63). A careful look at the whole letter (and her total writings on child guidance) suggests strongly that when Ellen White wrote that "wicked children God does not love," she meant that ultimately children who continue to be "wicked" will not be taken to heaven.

[2] *Signs of the Times*, February 15, 1892; "His [Jesus'] heart is drawn out, not only to the best behaved children, but to those who have by inheritance objectionable traits of character. Many parents do not understand how much they are responsible for these traits in their children. . . . But Jesus looks upon these children with pity. He traces from cause to effect" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 517).

[3] See *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 558-565, for a sensitive letter to an indulged teenager.

[4] *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 74, 84, 123; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 355, 356.

[5] See previous footnotes, citing *Signs of the Times*, Feb. 15, 1892, and *The Desire of Ages*, p. 517.

[Adapted from Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: the Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998), pp. 59, 60.]

God's Providence in the 1843 Prophetic Chart

In 1850 Ellen White wrote that she "had seen that the 1843 [prophetic] chart was directed by the hand of the Lord, and that it should not be altered; that the figures were as He wanted them; that His hand was over and hid a mistake in some of the figures, so that none could see it, until His hand was removed." [1]

At first glance, one could wonder why God would want to hide a mistake! Those who begin with the presupposition that Jesus did not enter the closing phase of His mediatorial work in 1844 ridicule this Ellen White reference.

But those who have found meaning in these events, whether on earth or in heaven, also realize that God's ways are often cast in human language where

circumstances that God permits are described as events that God causes. When the author of Exodus wrote of God's conversation with Moses, he portrayed God as the Agent who "hardened" Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 10:1). However, the same writer also wrote of Pharaoh's responsibility for hardening his own heart (Ex. 8:15, 32; 9:34).

We think of Biblical circumstances where knowledge was "withheld" from dedicated men and women. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus joined two devastated disciples but they did not recognize Him because "their eyes were restrained" (Luke 24:16). A few hours later, while eating with their traveling Companion, "their eyes were opened and they knew Him" (Luke 24:31). If their eyes had been "opened" prematurely while walking toward Emmaus, they would have missed a great experience that God wanted them to share.

For reasons that God alone can explain best, Bible students in 1843 needed the experience of 1843-1844. Obviously God could have "stepped in" and guaranteed every date, every line of reasoning, when Charles Fitch and Apollos Hale prepared their chart. But that kind of divine intervention has been rare throughout history. Permitting men and women to work through their problems, learning special lessons that would not have been experienced otherwise, seems to have been God's general plan. [\[2\]](#)

What would have happened if William Miller had preached the true significance of 1844? What kind of public response would he have received if he had proclaimed the truth about a change in Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary instead of emphasizing His imminent return? No one would have listened to him; no one would have been stirred to read the Bible. After the disappointment of October 22, a group of his followers restudied their Bibles to discover the real meaning of 1844, an interest that never would have developed if Miller had not focused their attention on the Bible and its prophecies prior to 1844.

Notes

[\[1\]](#) *Early Writings*, p. 74. This chart, designed in 1842 by Charles Fitch, Congregational pastor, and Apollos Hale, Methodist preacher, was approved by

the Millerites in their Boston General Conference of May, 1842. The chart's graphic symbols and time periods became a well-known trademark of Millerite preaching as they endeavored to simplify in an attractive manner the time prophecies focusing on 1843. (See L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. IV, pp. 538, 616.)

[2] See Matt. 11:25; Mark 4:33; John 16:12; 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:11-14.

[Adapted from Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: the Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998), p. 490.]

Some Slaves Not Resurrected

In 1858 Ellen G. White wrote that "the slave master would have to answer for the soul of his slave whom he has kept in ignorance. . . . God cannot take the slave to heaven, who has been kept in ignorance and degradation, knowing nothing of God, or the Bible, fearing nothing but his master's lash, and not holding so elevated a position as his master's brute beasts. But He does the best thing for him that a compassionate God can do. He lets him be as though he had not been." [1]

However, a few pages later she reported that she "saw the pious slave rise [in the resurrection] in triumph and victory." [2] In many places she referred to the terrible conditions imposed on slaves in the South, treated "as though they were beasts." [3] Nevertheless, she was equally emphatic that "many of the slaves had noble minds." [4]

In these statements Ellen White was distinguishing between the "pious" slave and the "ignorant" slave who knows "nothing of God." Regarding the latter, she stated with prophetic insight that the most compassionate act for a just God would be to let such slaves remain in their graves, not to be resurrected for judgment.

Some object to this statement because the Bible says that "all who are in the graves will . . . come forth" (John 5:28, 29). A few chapters later, John quoted

Jesus: "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" (John 12:32). Here we have two examples among many where Bible writers used all-inclusive language but with very definite restrictions. No one but Universalists argue that everyone, sooner or later, will be redeemed, regardless of character or desire. Not all people will be drawn to Jesus because not all are willing to be drawn!

Another example of a general, all-inclusive statement is John the Revelator's description of the Second Advent: ". . . every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne'" (Rev. 6:15, 16). Obviously, not all slaves and not all free men are going to be lost!

Prophets, as well as everyone else, use inclusive language at times, and most people understand the implied restrictions. The next question is, How does God deal with those who are neither among those "who have done good," or "those who have done evil" (John 5:29)? The best we can do is to join Abraham, the father of the faithful, and believe with confidence: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25).

Notes

[1] *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 193 (*Early Writings*, p. 276).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 206 (*Early Writings*, p. 286).

[3] *Review and Herald*, Dec. 17, 1895.

[4] *Ibid.*

[Adapted from Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: the Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998), pp. 489, 490.]

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