

STEVE DAILY



ELLEN G. WHITE

A Psychobiography

Ellen G. White A Psychobiography

Steve Daily

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DEDICATION

DEDICATED TO:
JOHN DART (1936–2019)
L.A. Times Religion Editor

AND

TO ALL
WHO SEEK
THE TRUTH

NO
MATTER
WHAT
THE
COST

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to again thank all those who have endorsed my works in the past, and to offer a special thanks to those who have inspired me with a love for history and psychology. My love for history started with an outstanding history teacher in high school at Rio Lindo named Jim Canty. After that, the best teacher I ever had was a history professor at Loma Linda University, Paul Landa—God rest his soul. Since then, I have had a number of outstanding history, religion, and psychology graduate professors to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude. In history and religion, these professors include Jonathan Butler and Fred Hoyt, who served on my master’s thesis committee in history along with Landa. At Claremont, I had an amazing dissertation committee who encouraged and supported me every step of the way. Those committee members included Joseph Hough, Ann Taves, and Dan Rhodes. They made my doctoral work at Claremont an absolute delight.

My love for psychology was implanted by a professor at Andrews University named Eldon Chalmers, who was a licensed psychologist. He inspired me to make counseling my specialty at seminary and to later become a licensed psychologist. I also had the privilege of attending a university founded by Victor Frankl, Carl Rogers, and Rollo May, who gave occasional lectures on our campus along with many other famous psychologists and psychiatrists such as Albert Ellis, R. D. Laing, and Murray Bowen. My passion for psychology was greatly enhanced by my PhD dissertation committee, Gary Lawson, Jim Ewing, James Framo, and Jerry Lee, who were all outstanding authors in their own right. I thank them all, along with my amazing wife, Erllys, and wonderful adult children, Lindsay, Justin, and Stevanie. Finally, great thanks to my proofreader Laurie Sachar and to the rest of my book readers feedback group, listed below, who took the time to give me valuable input that I was able to carefully consider and implement into the final draft of this book. I want to also give my special thanks to all who will read this document with an open mind and an open heart, to seek the truth and benefit from it.

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INTRODUCTION: WHY THIS BOOK?

I grew up in Adventism and, like most Adventists, was taught that Ellen G. White was the last-day prophet of God, who received her testimonies and revelations directly from the Lord. The idea that anyone would presume to write a book like this, daring to evaluate the psychological dynamics connected to the prophet and her writings, was unthinkable. Why would anyone want to consign himself or herself to hell by assuming such a role? The prophetess was an untouchable. To question her inspiration was to question God Himself (don't worry, I know that God isn't male or female). And I never would have imagined myself doing it.

But one master's thesis in history and two doctoral dissertations, along with being out of the Adventist Church for ten years, has changed things. For twenty-four years, I taught university classes in Adventist history, religion, and psychology and wrote a number of books on these subjects as well, but I have never incorporated my training as a licensed psychologist and historian into the same book. This is a book that I feel uniquely qualified to write. Psychobiography has been around a long time, but has recently become a fast-growing field within the realms of psychology and biography that analyzes the lives and potential pathology of historically significant individuals through psychological theory. I have done a literature review in this field, and have especially benefitted from the guidelines of the *Handbook of Psychobiography*, edited by William Schultz, along with several other works on psychobiographical research, to help me write this book, but not to be bound by them. This book is not a classic psychobiography, despite the fact that history and psychology are the dominant disciplines employed in the writing. I have also sprinkled some theology and personal reflection throughout the book to make it my own unusual blend.

I first became fascinated by the value of a good psychobiography when I read Erik Erickson's *Young Man Luther*, many years ago, and after that *Gandhi's Truth*, and found Erickson's insights to be extremely helpful.¹ His observations did not treat Luther or Gandhi as friends or foes, but objectively analyzed the possible psychological dynamics in play. It is my desire to do the same, even though I was raised to believe that Ellen White

was a prophet. In the Seventh-Day Adventist history books I have written,² I have tried to treat Ellen White with grace and extend to her the benefit of the doubt, even when the historical evidence did not seem to be sympathetic. Unlike Walter Rea, Dirk Anderson, and others who were total devotees of the prophet, then discovered they had been betrayed and wrote books or started websites attacking and exposing Ellen White's faults, I was never a fundamentalist follower of the prophetess, so I never experienced the same anger or sense of betrayal that many Adventists have. Especially those who discovered her plagiarism and other flaws after years or even a lifetime of devotion to the matriarch of Adventism.

This is not to say that my discovery of her plagiarism and other deceptive actions wasn't traumatic. Her role in Adventism certainly did impact my life growing up, and it was very disappointing to discover who she really was. And I truly do empathize with those who feel that they wasted their lives, or most of their lives, promoting a lie and a fraud. Their anger is totally understandable. I certainly do not blame them for the positions they have taken to try to expose Ellen for who she really was. But their experience is not mine. I was in my early thirties when I became aware that there were major problems with the writings of Ellen White, and that even the most objective and honorable Adventists who researched her plagiarism had to admit that it was extensive, wrong, and indefensible. But beyond that, my honest questions about the prophetess surfaced much earlier in my own home.

I had a father who was very skeptical by nature, and one day he observed me reading one of Ellen White's books that I was assigned to read for a class, dealing with the subject of masturbation. Her conclusions were that it caused every form of harmful disease and premature death. My dad was aware of what she had written and asked me what I thought of it. As a thirteen-year-old boy, I admitted that I didn't know quite what to think. My father just smiled, and said, "Well, don't let it worry you too much. She didn't always know what she was talking about!" I would learn in the years ahead that although he never had the opportunity to study the subject as I did, he was nevertheless very wise. And I'm sure his attitude saved me from a lot of unnecessary guilt and fear that the writings of Ellen White produced in many of my peers.

This work will evaluate new historical research that has come to light over the last ten years. During that period, an unknown White Estate insider released a number of unauthorized statements of Ellen White from suppressed areas of the vault (which I wasn't even allowed to see as a historian) on the Internet. The White Estate was then forced to confirm the validity of these "testimonies," and in 2015 claimed that it was releasing all her "testimonies" in honor of the one hundredth anniversary of her death. So, this material is incorporated into the book along with what I knew before. In the past, I have been critical of an all-or-nothing approach to Ellen, either glorifying her as a saint or denouncing her as a fraud. But with the addition of the new material I have found, I can no longer deny that her life contained patterns of premeditated fraud and deception that cannot easily be dismissed or rationalized. When all the evidence is in, a strong case can be made that the prophetess may have been one of the most successful con artists in history.

I find Ellen Gould Harmon-White to be the most fascinating psychological study I have ever encountered. As the book unfolds, we will see patterns of narcissism and high-functioning sociopathy that have not been previously revealed. This book can rightly be called polemical in the sense that it is highly controversial and challenges traditional views of the prophetess which have held sway for more than a century. Now that I have no longer been connected with the Adventist Church for the past decade, there will be no attempt to extend Ellen White undo grace, or to engage in the apology and hagiography that has been commonplace in Adventism. Rather, I will attempt to be brutally honest but fair in the evaluations and observations contained in this volume.

Because so much has been written to put Ellen on an unrealistic pedestal, this work will concentrate on the lesser known things about the prophetess which raise questions about her psychological and moral health. Some will certainly accuse me of writing this book out of spite or bitterness against the Adventist Church because it fired me after thirty-five years of ministry. Nothing could be further from the truth. I started attending John Wimber's Vineyard Church in 1985, and was convinced at that time that the Vineyard Movement represented a much healthier expression of Christianity than what I had found in Adventism. As I prayed about this, the Lord convicted me to stay in Adventism until it rejected me. This wasn't thrilling to me, but

I tried to be obedient and to bring what I considered to be healthy change into Adventist subculture for as long as I was able.

I have felt great relief and joy since leaving Adventist subculture, but do not feel anger or resentment toward the church. It did me a great favor cutting me loose, because I have enjoyed the last ten years working as a psychologist in the employ of UCLA so much more than the years I spent working for Adventist universities. UCLA has been an awesome employer. I continue to pastor a nondenominational congregation, GraceWay Community Church, in Riverside, California. But I do find Adventism to be a fascinating subculture to study, and am particularly interested in the role that Ellen White played in the formulation and history of this subculture. I am hoping that this book might have a similar value to Robert Anderson's *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon*, or Fawn Brodie's outstanding work, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (1995).

Some feminists may suggest that it is condescending or even sexist for a male author to engage in the kind of critique of a female icon that is contained in this work. But if a person of one race were to expose fraud and immorality on the part of someone of a different race, would that make the whistleblower or the one who uncovered the evidence a racist? I certainly would not take such a position. When I was pursuing my doctoral degree at Claremont, I became familiar with the classic work of Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The thesis of this outstanding book is that oppressed groups themselves must be responsible for overcoming their oppression and not relying on those in the oppressing groups to play such a role. The material contained in this book is not focused on Ellen White as a woman, but as a person who gradually became a powerful religious leader and learned over a lifetime how to manipulate, control, and abuse others in the name of God.

There are only two works in Adventism that have attempted to apply some psychological evaluation to Ellen White, an activity that is nearly considered to be blasphemous by many Adventists. Janet Numbers Swain has written a valuable chapter in the revised edition of her husband's *Prophetess of Health*, which will be addressed in chapter 3. Bernie Irwin wrote a sympathetic or apologetic psychobiography of the young Ellen entitled *Ellen White We Never Knew You*. The primary value of this volume

as I see it is that it provides a genogram or ancestral chart of the Ellen Gould Harmon-White family, and a number of historical insights into the families' background that are largely based on an unpublished paper by Ron Graybill, former associate director of the White Estate. I have prayed that if my own attempt at psychobiography provided in this book will do more harm than good, God will not allow it to be completed or published. Otherwise, it is my hope and prayer that this volume will contribute to the growing literature of psychobiography, as well as to raise important questions about the nature of religion and religious authority, including the following:

1. Is there a difference between believing that the Bible writers had a God-given inspiration and authority, and attributing such authority to any other human being? After reading this book, how does Ellen White differ, most obviously, from Bible writers?
2. Is it possible to evaluate the psychological dynamics and motives of another human being without being presumptuous? Is psychobiography a legitimate field?
3. No matter what we might conclude about Ellen White's psychodynamics, motives, and morals, is it fair to say that she lived a remarkably complex, conflicted, and productive life?
4. Is there both healthy and unhealthy religion? What's the main difference between religion and spirituality? After reading this book, where would you put Ellen White on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being healthy religion?



William Miller
Courtesy of Free SDA Pioneers

CHAPTER 1

Family of Origin

I could see no pleasure in my life. I did not wish to live, and I dared not die, for I was not prepared.

—Ellen Harmon

I like the true story about the police officer who responded to a domestic violence call, where he found a wife who had eight kids and was feeling so overwhelmed that she literally shot her husband for stepping onto a freshly mopped kitchen floor. The officer who arrived at the scene was so amazed and flustered by this event that he immediately ran out to his squad car and called the situation in to his captain at police headquarters. The captain calmly replied, “Have you arrested the wife?” “No, sir, I haven’t,” said the nervous officer. “Why not?” demanded his captain. The troubled officer responded, “Because she is still in the kitchen, and the floor’s still not dry!”

Ellen White, née Harmon, grew up in a family with eight children, and I can at least testify that it was more functional than the previous family. If you grew up watching the television show *Eight Is Enough!* you know that there are a lot of crazy scenarios that emerge in such a family, even if you have never been part of one. There is not a lot written about Ellen Harmon’s family of origin, but when we look at the big picture, I believe it would be accurate to say that she had two solid, committed, productive parents who loved her and her seven siblings. They had a stable marriage, at least an average income, and basic Christian values. They were both busy parents who may not have had the time to give each of their eight kids the attention they may have desired. And this was especially true for the final two children who happened to be twins as well. We will say more about Ellen’s need for attention, in particular, in the next chapter. But for now, we can say that all the kids were taught to be responsible and to help out with family chores and duties.

On the challenging side, as far as the big picture is concerned, the family had to deal with some significant changes. It moved from being a rural farm family to becoming an urban business family. The father changed professions from farmer to hatmaker. The family had to deal with the major trauma of Ellen's life-threatening head injury, where the doctors and the family expected her to die, and then the process of her recovery after she regained consciousness. Finally, most of the family were disfellowshipped or excommunicated from the Chestnut Street United Methodist Church, their home church, for their involvement in the Millerite movement. I want to come back to how Ellen and her family reacted to this rejection later in the chapter, but first let us return to some of the positive characteristics of the Harmon family.

Traits of a Healthy Family

One of the classic works in family studies is Dolores Curran's *Traits of a Healthy Family*.³ The book incorporates research from more than five hundred professionals working with families who filled out a fifty-six-question survey, revealing the most common traits they found in the healthiest families. In their order of significance, these were the fifteen most important traits:

- Communicate and listen well.
- Affirm and support each other.
- Teach respect for each other.
- Develops a sense of trust.
- A sense of play and humor.
- Sense of shared responsibility.
- Teach a sense of right and wrong.
- Strong sense of family rituals and traditions.
- Balanced interactions among members.
- Shared religious core, faith is vital.
- Privacy is respected, healthy boundaries.
- Value service to others.
- Value table time and conversation.
- Share leisure time.

- Admit to and seek help with problems.

From my own research and analysis of the Harmon family, I concluded that at least twelve of these traits seemed to be present in the home that Ellen grew up in, and possibly more. There does not seem to be a lot of evidence that the family engaged in much play or that it was known for its sense of humor. Several biographers who have attempted to focus to some degree on Ellen's early life, such as Arthur White, Herb Douglass, and George Knight, have presented her as a pleasant girl who was not the solemn, serious, grim person that many have supposed. But all admit, as she herself did, that her terrible head injury at the age of nine, which temporarily deformed her face, "took all joy" from her life and left her in the deepest state of depression.⁴

This injury, which left her in an unconscious stupor for three weeks, was so bad that her father could not recognize her when he returned from a trip and saw her for the first time after the tragic accident. This broke Ellen's heart, and she was horrified when she was able to look in the mirror herself. But she was determined to try to return to school. Unfortunately, this effort failed, and her formal education was over. At this point, she turned more toward serious spiritual concerns, and would later attribute her injury as the event that would ultimately lead to her true conversion.⁵ However, it would be inaccurate to assume that Ellen was a carefree child before her injury.

A Fearful Childhood

In his book *Meeting Ellen White: A Fresh Look at Her Life and Ministry*, George Knight documents that when Ellen was just eight years old, she had a terrifying fear of not being ready for the Lord's soon return. In Ellen's words: "I could see no pleasure in my life. I did not wish to live, and I dared not die, for I was not prepared" At the same time, she confessed to having an extreme sense of unworthiness and being very sober minded.⁶ It seems that her injury and involvement with the Millerite movement would only accentuate these feelings. I see little evidence that Ellen's family majored in play and humor, shared much leisure time together, or excelled in admitting or seeking help with problems. Otherwise, it seems from the evidence that it was a pretty functional and healthy family.

However, one of the characteristics we see in the family when it was disfellowshipped by the Methodist Church is a trait that would seem to follow Ellen Harmon-White her entire life. So, I want to carefully look at this conflict and to analyze how it was interpreted by both the Harmon family, Ellen herself, and the Methodist Church. As I just mentioned, the family did not seem to excel at admitting its problems or seeking help for them. The Harmon family did not want to admit any fault in their conflict with the Methodist Church, either at the time it occurred, or in retrospect looking back at the incident for years to come. Ellen's attitude at the time they were expelled, and her recollections about being disfellowshipped in the years that would follow were the same. The family did nothing wrong, and they were expelled unfairly for no good reason. As we will see in the chapters to come, a self-righteous need to justify herself would follow Ellen her entire lifetime.

Disappointment and Rejection

In fact, the reasons given by Ellen for the family being disfellowshipped from the Methodist Church on Chestnut Street in Maine, USA, appear to be the weakest of reasons. The family was disfellowshipped in September of 1843, the month before the first Millerite disappointment, which occurred on October 22, 1843. Yet Ellen makes no mention of the family involvement in this movement, which was the primary reason given by the Methodist Church for its discipline, along with the Harmons being disruptive in their attempts to convert other church members to Millerism.

Regarding the disfellowshipping of the Harmon family, which included herself as a girl of sixteen years of age, Mrs. White insisted in her biographical memoirs,⁷ published in 1860, that the reasons given for the discipline were as follows:

- Because she “rejoiced in the soon coming of Jesus.”
- Because she “longed for Jesus to come.”
- Because she “wished Jesus to come and save his children.”
- Because she had “stated, that when I had lived nearest to the Lord, the more earnestly did I long for his appearing.”

- Because she told them “what Jesus had done for me, through the belief of the near-coming of the Son of God.”
- Because she said, “It was Christ and the hope of his soon coming that made me free.”
- Because “the entire (Harmon) family were interested in the doctrine of the Lord’s coming.”
- Because they were “looking for and loving the appearing of our Saviour.”
- “The only charge brought against us was that we had walked contrary to their rules. It was asked, ‘What rules have we violated?’ After a little hesitation it was stated that we had absented ourselves from the class meeting and had attended other meetings, and they considered that we had violated their rules.”
- Because “if they mentioned the coming of the Savior or their love for his appearing, there was a hard pressing spirit against them and such displeasure manifested that there was a plain division of feeling and we knew if they loved Jesus they would love to hear of his coming.”
- Because “they wished it understood that it was not for immoral conduct that we were turned out, but for a breach of their rules.”
‘We were all pushed out of the church because we believed and talked the near coming of our Savior.’”

Clearly, the given reasons do not pass the smell test of common sense. The Methodists were not a church that rejected the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ. So, the first eight reasons Ellen White gives are not reasons at all, and the last two reasons given are so vague and ambiguous that they are difficult to decipher. It is only under reason nine that she bares some light on the subject, while still remaining extremely vague. “We had absented ourselves from the class meeting and had attended other meetings, and they considered that we had violated their rules.” The truth was that the Harmons had quit attending the Methodist Church for an extended period because they had joined the Millerite movement. The Methodists were not opposed to members attending other churches; they were opposed to the Millerite meetings because of their unbiblical date setting and condemnation of churches that didn’t agree with them.

Deliberate Dishonesty

Ellen fails to identify the meetings as Millerite, to mention the heretical date setting involved, or to own up to the very specific rules that they violated, such as trying to convert church members to Millerism and rebuffing repeated attempts by the church to get them to stop their disruptive behavior. She presents the case as if the Harmon family was unfairly persecuted, and that they had no idea why they were rejected. It is striking to see how she evades mentioning Miller or his meetings to say nothing of the biggest issue, which was the time setting or date setting for the Second Coming, which Jesus Himself specifically warned against (Mark 13:32).

When Jesus said, “No one knows the day or the hour,” the Millerites tried to counter it by saying, “That was true in Christ’s day, but not in our day.” But Jesus says even the angels in heaven and the Son of God Himself do not know the day or the hour, but the Father only.”

This should make it clear that date setting is a heresy, and something that the Methodist Church was right to reject. William Miller was also suspected of holding heretical beliefs as a Freemason, a secret society he belonged to, but claimed to leave in 1831. However, membership in Freemasonry was considered to be irrevocable, given that they took vows for life. To what degree key Adventist leaders, including Ellen White, were influenced by this heresy is unclear. But several of them, including the future prophetess, would later be accused of being Freemasons, in spite of Ellen White’s condemnation of the movement⁸ for the following reasons:

Critics who claim that the founders of Seventh-day Adventism were Freemasons, generally base this claim on the following evidence: 1) William Miller, founder of Adventism, was a Free Mason; but seemed to curtail his involvement in the organization in 1831. 2) Pictures of early Seventh-day Adventist leaders with the hidden hand or hand-in-jacket pose, which they say is a Masonic sign; 3) Ellen White’s use of phrases that can be found in Masonic literature; 4) Masonic logo used at Ellen White’s funeral; 5) The 1874 “Way of Life” lithograph, which

contains an all-seeing-eye; 6) and James and Ellen White's tombstones with the Masonic Egyptian obelisk.

Like most negative accusations lodged against Ellen White and her leadership, these concerns have also been denied and dismissed by the prophet's apologists. But this trend really began with Ellen herself. Not too many years ago, a man by the name of Keith Moxon wrote the Methodist Church where the Whites were dismissed to get their take on the incident. The following is what the church had to say.

The Harmon family was dismissed in September, 1843 from Chestnut Street Church on the grounds of breach of discipline... The reason for their dismissal was not that they preached the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is a tenant of our orthodox faith which is confirmed from the Articles of Religion 1784. Their dismissal was occasioned by their breach of discipline in proclaiming the views of William Miller's time setting. I read these entries to mean that after much quiet counsel to refrain from their disruptive behavior in church meetings the members of Chestnut Street Church took what they believed to be their only recourse, to dismiss the Harmon Family.

The truth is the road to freedom,

Gilbert Jorgensen⁹

According to Jorgensen, the Methodist Church representative who responded to the inquiry, the Harmons not only tried to push the Millerite date setting heresy on their Methodist Church, but did so in a disruptive manner, despite the church's repeated efforts to dissuade them. Ellen was certainly aware of this letter that was sent to their family in September of 1843, but she feigns ignorance of this in all her future correspondence concerning the matter. This deliberate unwillingness to acknowledge and evade the truth is sometimes referred to as prevarication. Prevarication is defined as to act or speak evasively; to circle around the truth, but not quite tell the whole truth; to intentionally withhold information which causes the hearer to gain a false impression. This seems to be a repeated pattern in the life of Ellen Harmon White, which emerges consistently and seems to begin with this rejection by the Methodist Church. But many of the examples of it

in the chapters ahead are generally not known by the vast majority of Adventists, and are truly frightening.

I will close the chapter with a copy of one of the actual records from the Methodist Church, which Jorgensen sent as evidence. He includes a note of interest that Elizabeth, Ellen's twin sister, was not removed from the church, because she rejected the Millerite date setting and remained a Methodist for life. This is just one of many ways that Ellen and her twin would go their separate ways. A relationship that we will explore in the next chapter.

Page 3: The typed material: "Harmon family disfellowshipped for "long absence from our Church and ordinances and supporting an anti-Methodist doctrine and congregation, viz.: Millerism, etc."—Records of Stewards and Leaders of Chestnut Street M.E. Church of Portland, Maine, from February to September, 1843, regarding the case of Robert Harmon, Eunice Harmon, Sarah Harmon, and Ellen Harmon. (Quoted on p. 478, "The Midnight Cry" by F. D. Nichol.)

Note concerning EGW's twin sister:

Elizabeth Harmon Bangs, Ellen G. White's twin sister did not fall into the Millerite trap or for her sister's "visions" and she remained a member of the Methodist Church till she died, December 21, 1891.

Questions

1. If the Harmon family was generally healthy, was it at all responsible for the childhood fear Ellen experienced and her pathology that would follow?
2. What explains an eight-year-old who is filled with fear and terrified she is lost for eternity?
3. To what degree did the Great Disappointment and the rejection that accompanied it influence Ellen for the rest of her life?
4. Did the disappointment and rejection tied to it play a role in Ellen's dishonesty relating to her being put out of the Methodist Church?



Ellen (standing) and her twin
Elizabeth Bangs, circa 1878

Courtesy of Ellen White Estate

CHAPTER 2

Twins

It was the hardest struggle of my young life to yield to my feebleness, and decide that I must leave my studies, and give up the hope of gaining an education.

—Ellen Harmon White

The story is told of a woman who was having a panic attack while giving birth. Because her husband was delayed in traffic, his brother, whom she wasn't particularly fond of, was trying to fill in for him until he showed up, and the doctor had just informed her that she was having twins. She was becoming so hysterical that the doctor decided he had to put her under, but in her delirious state, she told her brother-in-law to name the twins before she became unconscious. When her husband finally showed up, the doctor told him he had two healthy twins, a girl and a boy, and that his brother had given them their names. Appalled, the husband asked the doctor why he would let his idiot brother name the twins. "Because your wife told him to," said the physician. In a state of disbelief, the husband asked what names he gave them. "He named your daughter Denise," replied the doctor. "Not bad, maybe I misjudged my brother. What did he name my son?" The doctor just shook his head and said, "Danephew!"

Ellen Harmon-White was a fraternal twin as well, and there is a tremendous amount of research available to us today based on the studies of identical and fraternal twins. In this chapter, I first want to focus on the personality similarities and differences that we see in fraternal and identical twins, compared to the population at large, and then to explore the implications of this with regard to Ellen Harmon and her twin sister, Elizabeth.

Genetics and Personality

We know from twin studies¹⁰ that genetics play a very important part in the formulation and development of personality. Generally speaking, there are far more similarities between the personalities of identical twins than fraternal twins, just as there are many more similarities in the personalities of fraternal twins compared to other biological siblings. And finally, there are a good deal more personality similarities between biological siblings than adopted siblings.

Researchers who first examined the links between genes and personality found that it was typical for a study to examine self-reports of personality and compare the self-reports between fraternal twins—who share roughly 50 percent of their genes—to those of identical twins, who share 100 percent of their genes. In early twin studies, very consistent results emerged which suggested one thing: when it comes to personality, genes matter. For identical twins, heritability estimates hovered around 46 percent, and 23 percent for fraternal twins (a heritability of 1.00 means that all variance is genetic [Jang et al., 1996]). Together, this early work was very clear in its suggestion that there are some genetic influences on personality. The next question was which genes would be the biggest players in the gene-to-personality pathways?

To answer this question, there are two significant factors to consider: the tie between personality traits and genetic variants, and the relationship between some personality traits and personality issues. When it comes to personality traits, researchers have used a model called the Big 5, which divides traits into five main categories: extraversion, neuroticism, openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness. It has been a dominant theory since the 1950s, and is the one that was used for the personality tests on people having their genomes sequenced. According to the data,¹¹ it shows that extroversion and the tendency to be neurotic are heavily genetically influenced and most connected to heritability, while openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness are much less likely to be determined by one's genes. This will be significant with regard to Ellen Harmon-White.

Fraternal versus Identical Twins

The point is that genetics and biology play an important role when it comes to the formulation and development of personality. But not an

absolute or conclusive role, even in the case of identical twins. Research has shown that identical twins raised in the same family environment still develop different personalities based on how they experience the home environment differently, as well as their different experiences outside the home.¹² This is even truer for fraternal twins, so it isn't surprising that Ellen and Elizabeth developed very different personalities based on their contrasting experiences. And the more diverse their experiences became, the more their personalities developed in very different directions.

There seems to be good evidence that the two twins, who were the last of eight children born to the Harmon family, had a fairly close relationship up until Ellen's tragic accident. The fact that the rock that injured Ellen was thrown by a friend reacting to a trivial disagreement, that the twin sister was present and traumatized by the event, and that Ellen seemed to come so close to death were all very significant factors. My observation, based on the historical evidence, is that the twins' personalities moved in a number of very different directions following the accident. We will briefly explore five of these differences before we go further in this chapter.

Differences Between Ellen and Her Twin

1. *Ellen suffered from significantly more depression than her twin.* Given the temporary deformity, damage to her looks, and the ongoing physical problems that resulted from her injury, it is not surprising that Ellen described the aftermath of her accident as a time of extreme depression and despair. As she herself put it, the injury "took all the joy out of my life." "I could see no pleasure in my life. I did not wish to live, and I dared not die, for I was not prepared."¹³ This is not surprising, but to be somewhat expected. Elizabeth stayed in school; Ellen didn't.

Ellen stayed in her bed most of the time and felt like a dependent burden on her family (although later she tried to do what she could to contribute to her father's hat making from her bed), while Elizabeth pursued a normal life.

2. *Ellen suffered from very low self-esteem compared to her twin.* While both girls seemed to have good intelligence and potential

before the rock tragedy, Ellen was unable to continue in school despite two separate failed efforts to return. In the first effort, the friend who injured her and was clearly guilt ridden by her actions attempted to tutor her back up to speed, but was unable to accomplish this, and Ellen had to drop out. Ellen repeatedly noted that her friends treated her very differently based on her distorted looks, and that she sadly came to realize how much people valued the superficial outward appearance. Her second effort to return to school also failed due to her dizzy spells, inability to concentrate, and the shaking of her hands that kept her from writing. This caused her extreme grief. “It was the hardest struggle of my young life to yield to my feebleness, and decide that I must leave my studies, and give up the hope of gaining an education.”¹⁴ Ellen says this many years later, in retrospect, but at the time she may have had strong subconscious reasons for not wanting to return to school that we will explore more in chapter 3.

3. *Ellen’s’ personality became much more driven and attention seeking than her twin.* Ellen could have given in to her depression and low self-esteem, and given up on life itself in despair, as she desired. But as she herself said, it was a fear of not being ready to meet her Maker that kept her alive. It was in this context that she tried to contribute to her father’s business in some small way and, more importantly, that she became very serious about spiritual things, in an attempt to remove this fear of being lost. It is fascinating to see how Ellen moved from feeling her life was over and worthless to pursuing a determined course that she would be significant despite her disabilities. This drive to be significant would become inextricably connected to her pursuit of God and her belief that God had given her a special calling. She also developed a great need to have others recognize and acknowledge this significance, which would follow her throughout her life.

There was no such drive evidenced in the life of her twin sister who seemed content with a nominal spirituality, not pursuing a career, marrying, and raising her kids. Nor did her

sister Elizabeth seem to have the need for approval seeking, recognition, or to be the center of attention that would develop in her twin sister, Ellen. Ronald and Janet Numbers, in the revised and enlarged edition of *Prophetess of Health*, have suggested that this need for attention seeking was related to a somatization disorder and a histrionic personality disorder in Ellen White. We will examine these views in the next chapter.

4. *Ellen became much more “spiritual” than her twin.* There is very little evidence that Ellen was any more spiritual than her twin sister, Elizabeth, before her terrible injury. Although, we have noted that Ellen confessed to having a “terrifying fear” that she was not ready for the Lord’s return at the age of eight, well before her head injury occurred. But it is only after her accident that she develops a preoccupation with addressing her spiritual doubts by actually pursuing God. As for the Harmon family in general, they appeared to be nominal Methodists until they became involved with the Millerite movement, which ultimately resulted in them being expelled from the Methodist Church, except for Elizabeth, who seemed to remain a nominal Methodist her whole life. Once the second Great Disappointment occurred on October 22, 1844, and the Millerite movement began to dissipate, the Harmon family seemed to lose some of its newfound spiritual enthusiasm.

Ellen, by contrast, went from becoming a passionate shouting Methodist in her early teens to becoming a passionate Millerite in her mid teens, to becoming a passionate Adventist when she was seventeen. In the Advent movement that survived Millerism, she combined her charismatic passion from the shouting Methodists with her shut-door Adventist beliefs, which condemned those who had rejected Miller’s message. In fact, it was Ellen’s “vision” at the age of seventeen, which depicted people falling off a narrow path, that was seen as the God-given basis for the initial shut-door teaching of Adventism, which insisted that only those who had accepted the 1844 Millerite message could be saved, and probation was closed for all others.

It is unclear as to how many of Ellen's family of origin embraced the Advent message. It is generally believed that her sister Sarah and brother Robert did, although they never seemed to play any prominent role in the movement, and both died young from consumption (tuberculosis), Robert at twenty-seven (1853) and Sarah at forty-five (1868). Sarah's son Franklin Belden became a well-known hymn writer in Adventism, but later rejected Ellen's prophetic gift and was disfellowshipped from the SDA Church in 1907. There is some evidence that Ellen's parents and sister, Mary, were at least sympathetic to the Advent movement. But Elizabeth, or Lizzie as Ellen called her twin, never had anything to do with Adventism and seemed to remain a nominal Methodist to her death, in spite of pleas that Ellen made to her in letters to be converted. Lizzie never shared the spiritual passion Ellen developed after her head injury.

5. *Ellen developed a type A personality, whereas this did not seem to be the case with Elizabeth.* In a nutshell, type A individuals tend to be aggressive, ambitious, controlling, highly competitive, preoccupied with status, workaholics, hostile, and often show a lack of patience. Type B people tend to be relaxed, less stressed, flexible, emotionally expressive, more passive and laid-back in their attitudes, and generally much less "accomplished" than their type A counterparts. I'm sure many, if not most Adventists, would be horrified and offended at the suggestion that Ellen White developed many of the characteristics connected to a type A personality. And it should be acknowledged that religious leaders who are type A personalities tend to carry these traits much differently than type A leaders in other professions, which leads us to the Pharisee phenomenon.

The Pharisee Phenomenon

I believe that the Pharisees were generally type A personalities, but they were experts at hiding their hostility, aggression, and ambition under a godly guise. They were masters at making the masses believe they were

something that they were not. Ellen White would even outdo the Pharisees in becoming such a master. The more you believe you have a special calling from God that sets you apart from others, the easier it is to become blind to your own ambition, control, dishonesty, and need for status, under the guise of doing God's will. In the chapters ahead, we will revisit these type A traits as they developed to an extreme in the life of Ellen White. But I want to add that I don't, for a moment, believe Ellen White was a typical type A personality. I believe she was a very complex personality, a confusing mixture of deep spiritual desires and motives that conflicted with basic human fears and concerns which were very understandable, given the positions she found herself in. It is easy to be critical of Ellen White when confronted with her plagiarism, dishonesty, and inconsistencies, but I tend to be a type A personality myself, and I am not sure that I would have chosen a whole lot better if confronted with the exact same pressures and circumstances. When power and opportunity are combined with ambition, trouble usually follows. But this cannot be an excuse or a justification for much of the behavior we will read about in the chapters to come.

In closing, twins have a much greater tendency to be compared by people than siblings in general. It is hard enough to see your life virtually derailed (although much of this was her choice as we shall see in the next chapter) by a freak injury, which was totally unnecessary, when you are a normal sibling. But this is all the more difficult when you see your twin sister continue living a very normal life, while you languish in depression, dysfunction, disability, and pain. It is totally understandable that a nine-year-old confronted with these circumstances would try to desperately find an alternative reality, which would give her life some kind of meaning that could compete with her twin sister, who continued to go to school, continued to have plenty of friends, and continued to live a fairly happy life. But the "reality" that Ellen created would be largely pathological.

Questions

1. Is there evidence that Ellen's personality changed based on traumatic events in her early life?
2. Do you believe that being a twin played a major or important role in Ellen's life?
3. Which differences between Ellen and Elizabeth do you find most interesting?
4. If Ellen wasn't the God-chosen visionary prophet, who could pontificate on almost every subject as she professed to be, was she really just a Pharisee?



White Family, after Ellen marries, circa 1864
Courtesy of the Ellen White Estate

CHAPTER 3

Creative Malady

Her claim to visions...apparently self-hypnotic episodes...in no way differed from the trances of the run-of-the-mill mesmerist or spiritualist.

—Ronald and Janet Numbers, *Prophetess of Health*

The story is told of a patient or client who was seeing a psychotherapist for the first time, and had just gotten comfortably seated on the couch when he was asked to share a little bit about why he was there. “Well, Doc,” he said, “I consider myself to be a very self-aware person, but it seems that others are always accusing me of arrogance, egomania, and being out of touch with reality.” The psychologist looked at him for a few moments and said, “Well, maybe we should start at the beginning.” “Of course,” replied the patient. “In the beginning, I created the heavens and the earth...”

It was in the process of writing my doctoral dissertation at Claremont back in 1984 on Ellen White that I ran across a fascinating book by George Pickering, entitled *Creative Malady*.¹⁵ This brilliant volume explores the role that illness played in the lives and success of six very famous Victorian individuals, Charles Darwin, Florence Nightingale, Mary Baker Eddy, Sigmund Freud, Marcel Proust, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. It is a shame that Pickering did not include Ellen White in his analysis, for in many ways she perfectly fits with his thesis, and he could have spared me the effort of writing this book myself. Pickering’s work received rave reviews from the *Washington Post*, *Publishers Weekly*, and many other critics.

Pickering argued persuasively that psychoneurosis may occasionally play a necessary role in the creative process. The eminent Victorians that he examines did their most impressive work while suffering from seemingly severe physical diseases. Illnesses which Pickering believed were psychological rather than physical. By adopting an invalid status through various physical conditions that these individuals applied to themselves,

they were able to justify reclusive and even tyrannical behaviors which helped enable them to pursue their dominating passions. And the same was true of Ellen White. She adopted a semi-invalid status at various times throughout her life, following her severe nose/head injury to generate attention, care, sympathy, support, and admiration.

Ellen “Rocks”?

It might seem ridiculous to suggest that Ellen Harmon White actually benefitted from the rock injury she experienced in her youth. But this is certainly a factor that needs to be explored. For example, there is no question that the rock injury Ellen suffered temporarily distorted her looks and deformed her facial features as the swelling increased (to the point where her own father did not recognize her). But it is worth noting that the injury to her nose probably caused a concussion but did not send her into a coma on the spot, and that she continued to walk home with her sister’s help, only falling into a three-week coma later as a result of the swelling. The swelling that occurred from the impact of the stone was not of the brain itself, but it temporarily affected it. Ellen suffered a severe broken nose, but the extent of actual brain damage is undetermined, uncertain, and, to any significant degree, unlikely. However, she certainly noticed the attention and sympathy she received from family as a result of the injury, and it was in stark contrast to the lack of attention she had received before the injury as a twin who, with her sister, was the youngest of eight children. Ellen attributed the social rejection of peers to her deformed features, but there is little evidence to suggest that the deformity continued once the swelling subsided, or that she experienced any permanent physical deformity from the injury.

The same can be said for the social and emotional benefits of the injury as well. She not only received a lot of attention and sympathy from family with regard to the physical pain and effects of her accident, but also the same was true with regard to her depression and social isolation from peers. She was now the focal point of family attention. More importantly, in an age of very set female roles, particularly in middle-class and lower-middle-class homes, Ellen was now enabled to escape these expectations on the grounds of her feebleness or physical weakness. This would allow her more and more to pursue independence and the spiritual passion that she would

come to develop. Like Pickering's subjects, she would consciously or subconsciously see that major physical weakness or invalid status would grant her some very important advantages in life.

Initially, as she began to recover from her injury, it seemed to be her desire to return to a normal life as soon as possible. Her attempts to return to school and then her desire to contribute to the family from her bed, by helping her father in his hat-making business, fit with this pattern. But both of these attempts ultimately failed as her invalid status prevailed. Her feebleness would never allow her to get a formal education, even though she seemed to learn to read and pursue a self-taught education on her own. She not only liked attention, but also, she liked to be in control, not being told what to do by others. Her hat-making work was also fairly short-lived, which was probably a good thing, because it involved the use of chemicals that were truly harmful to one's health.

Not a Mad Hatter

Much has been written about nineteenth-century hat making and its use of mercurous nitrate, a chemical that caused a number of ailments including early onset dementia and erethism, which is defined as a state of abnormal mental excitement or irritation. To what degree Ellen was negatively impacted by this chemical, we don't really know. But we do know that her hat-making efforts were fairly short-lived and seemed to conflict with her attempts to regain her health. The toxic elements used in the process could not have been helpful for her. For the term "mad as a hatter" has been traced to the madness that was strongly correlated with hat making from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries.

There seems to be three schools of thought concerning how Ellen's childhood injury affected her health and her spiritual ministry throughout her lifetime. The first is based purely on a medical model that attributed Ellen's head injury to be the cause of what was formerly known as temporal lobe or psychomotor epilepsy. Today, the medical model would say that she suffered from complex partial seizures, and in this theory, they were the cause of her visions, which had nothing to do with God. The second theory, which is espoused by apologists for Ellen White and the SDA denomination, is that Ellen's head injury was very serious, but that God

used this weak human vessel to accomplish His supernatural works throughout her lifetime. Finally, Ronald Numbers, a historian, and his wife, Janet, a psychologist, have done a nice job of combining both historical evidence relating to Ellen's writings on health with insightful psychological analysis concerning her personality and mental health, based on this evidence. They conclude that she meets the mental health conditions diagnosed as somatization disorder coupled with histrionic personality disorder. I wish to expand on their approach in this book, which looks at the prophet's whole life and ministry. In the remainder of this chapter and in the chapters that follow, we will explore and evaluate these three views, while discovering that many of Ellen's visions, if not all, were conveniently invented.

Visions or Seizures?

1. *Medical reductionism.* In 1981, Delbert H. Hodder, an Adventist pediatrician, with a subspecialty in neurology, wrote a very controversial article in *Evangelica* entitled "Visions or Partial-Complex Seizures."¹⁶ The doctor concluded that what Adventists assumed to be "visions" from God were actually partial-complex seizures that were the result of her serious head injury at the age of nine. I was an avid reader of *Evangelica* at the time, and was writing my master's thesis in history that focused a great deal on Ellen White. So, I was fascinated by this claim and did everything possible to explore its veracity. I learned that the terms "partial-complex seizures" and "complex-partial seizures" are sometimes used interchangeably, and that these seizures were previously known as temporal lobe epilepsy or psychomotor epilepsy.

Dr. Hodder was not alone in promoting this theory. Shortly after he published his article, an Adventist colleague, who was also a physician, reasserted the same interpretation of Ellen's head injury in what amounted to medical reductionism. Molleurus Couperus, a dermatologist, also believed that Ellen's "visions" could be explained by a purely medical model in his article published in *Adventist Currents* entitled "The Significance of Ellen White's Head Injury."¹⁷ Adventists understandably reacted very negatively to this threatening theory, and church leadership, including the White Estate, was quick to respond, drawing on medical and

mental health experts, as well as a physician of their own, to refute these charges. Donald Peterson, a professor of neurology at Loma Linda University, wrote an entire book on the subject entitled *Visions or Seizures: Was Ellen White the Victim of Epilepsy?*¹⁸ The book insisted that there was no good evidence to support the notion that Ellen White had any form of epilepsy, and that complex-partial seizures could not possibly be responsible for Ellen White's visions.

When this book and these articles were written, I was not a trained or licensed psychologist, and was much less familiar with the practice of medical reductionism than what I am familiar with today. But over the last twenty-seven years, I have seen repeated examples of medical reductionism, psychiatric reductionism, and psychological reductionism by various practitioners in my work as a psychologist, which have bothered me a great deal.¹⁹ It seems way too common for physicians, psychiatrists, and therapists to reduce people to a diagnosis that can somehow be treated simply with a prescription, or a one-dimensional approach that totally fails to see the big picture. Such is the case with Hodder and Couperus. To reduce the "visions" and ministry of Ellen White to partial-complex seizures is myopic, unrealistic, and an extreme overstatement, which made it easy for the denomination to knock down this straw man, which leads us to the next point.

People of the Lie

2. *SDA apologetics.* From the very beginning of what would become Seventh-Day Adventism, the Millerites who gathered around Ellen Harmon embraced her "visions" as a ray of hope in a cesspool of disappointment and despair. They were so psychologically invested in needing to believe that her "visions" were from God that cognitive dissonance would not permit them to believe otherwise. This was a fascinating psychological dynamic because the Millerites were not generally a charismatic group of believers. In fact, William Miller himself was anything but charismatic, in terms of his emotions, theology, or spirituality. Although he was eventually persuaded to proclaim the end of the world, he was no bug-eyed fanatic. By contrast, Miller was a square-jawed, honest, churchgoing farmer, who had been a former captain in the War of 1812.

Miller was converted from Deism, a most uncharismatic religion, in 1816. He was also a Freemason, as we have noted, and then meticulously began to “search the Scriptures” for the truth. He was a Bible literalist, not a charismatic.

After two years of intense study, he was convinced that Daniel 8:14, “Unto 2,300 days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed,” referred to purging of the earth by fire, or the end of the world. Generally speaking, the people who followed Miller were not charismatics, including those who would leave Miller after the 1844 disappointment and later form the SDA Church. Ellen Harmon was the exception to this rule. She had been very active in the shouting Methodist branch of the Methodist Church, which was highly charismatic, before joining the Millerite movement. But she had to leave the shouting Methodists when the Harmons were expelled from the Methodist Church.

The shouting Methodists were known for their “extreme enthusiasm,” which included visionary trances, fainting, swooning, jumping, screaming, shouting, crawling on hands and knees, making animal noises, as well as holy hugs and holy kisses. In addition to this, the movement was famous for chaotic, disorderly services where rings or circles of believers would gather and shout, sing, or scream in competition with a minister who was trying to preach over the commotion.²⁰

Ellen, with her intense spirituality at that time, was a leader in the movement despite being only in her mid teens. As early as 1842, she was lamenting attacks that came against her from Millerite Adventists in Portland, Maine, who were not at all charismatic, whom she referred to as formalists. In one of her earliest tracts, *Experience and Views*, she included a section entitled “Opposition of Formal Brethren,” where she described in classic shouting Methodist language how God dealt with some of her critics.

At times the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me in such power that my strength was taken away. This was a trial to some of those who had come out from the formal churches... They did not believe that any one could be so filled with the Spirit of the Lord as to lose their strength... But, soon one of the family which had been most forward in opposing me, while praying fell

prostrate like one dead. His friends feared he was dying, but...he regained his strength to praise God, and shout with a voice of triumph... While attending an evening meeting I was much blessed, and again lost my strength. Another of the family mentioned, said he had no faith that it was the Spirit of God that was upon me... Brother R was immediately prostrated, and as soon as he could give utterance of his feelings, declared that it was of God.²¹

So, it was not unusual for Millerite Adventists to question the validity of Ellen's spiritual enthusiasm and emotionalism. But those who would make up the SDA church were so devastated after the Great Disappointment that they seemed to rally around Ellen as their savior or champion.

But many of these would gradually develop and express questions and reservations about her gift over the next seven years. Some of this was related to her shut-door theology and continued date setting, but much of it was the natural hostility that noncharismatics had toward "visions" and enthusiasm. This became enough of a problem that James White would write in 1851, "We are well aware that many honest seekers after truth and Bible holiness are prejudiced against visions."²² And he would discontinue publishing the "visions" as editor of the church paper, the *Review and Herald*.

Ironically, after vigorously defending charismatic practice for years, Ellen White herself would become hostile to other expressions of charismatic/Pentecostal religion both inside and outside Adventism, except for her own experience.²³ This would become the position of the SDA denomination as well, which has consistently defended the "visions" of Ellen White as the miraculous supernatural work of God, through a weak, feeble, uneducated human instrument, while condemning and opposing charismatic churches and charismatic activity both inside and outside Adventism as well. One consistent pattern in Adventism has been its unceasing apologetic defense of the "visions" of Ellen White in the face of plagiarism, error, contradiction, mistreatment of opponents, and theological inconsistency, themes that we will explore further in the chapters ahead, and which will reveal that Adventists were deceived into being a people of the lie.

Fifty Shades of Pathology?

3. *Historical/psychological evaluation.* By far, the most thoughtful psychological analysis of Ellen White that I have run across in my research is in an afterword added to the revised and enlarged edition of *Prophetess of Health*.²⁴ This addition is entitled “Ellen White on the Mind, and the Mind of Ellen White,” written by Ronald and Janet Numbers. I certainly agree with most of the observations in this document, with one small disclaimer. Numbers and his psychologist wife have diagnosed Ellen White as having somatization disorder with an accompanying histrionic personality disorder.²⁵

The American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* defines somatization disorder as “recurrent and multiple somatic complaints, of several years’ duration, for which medical attention has been sought, but that are apparently not due to any physical disorder.” In the same manual, histrionic personality disorder is described as “a pervasive pattern of excessive emotionality and attention seeking, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts.” Furthermore, “people with this disorder constantly seek or demand reassurance, approval, or praise from others and are uncomfortable in situations in which they are not the center of attention.”

Ron and Janet make a strong case applying these disorders to Ellen White, and I generally agree that their applications are appropriate and fit with the historical evidence. My only reservation is that it is generally unethical to diagnose people in such a manner, although it is commonly done in psychobiographies. The Goldwater rule is the informal name given to section 7.3 in the (APA) *Principles of Medical Ethics*, which states that it is unethical to give a professional opinion or diagnosis about public figures whom they have not examined in person, and from whom they have not obtained consent to discuss their mental health in public statements. The rule is named after Barry Goldwater, a presidential candidate, who sued and collected a major judgment for this very practice. And while I am not particularly worried about being sued by Ellen White, I am very cautious about rendering any kind of diagnosis for a non-client. My observations about Ellen White are purely historical, informed by my training as a

historian and a psychologist. We will look at both the historical and psychological evidence and let you, the reader, be the judge.

The authors also observe that Ellen demonstrated the symptoms of major depressive disorder and narcissism during her lifetime. They attribute Ellen's "visions" to a "histrionic personality" and a culture where "visions and trances were the order of the day." As they put it, "Her claim to visions...apparently self-hypnotic episodes...in no way differed from the trances of the run-of-the-mill mesmerist or spiritualist." My take on the "visions" is only slightly different, but in fairness to the authors, they do acknowledge that diagnostic categories alone are not adequate to account for Ellen's ministry. "We have no desire to reduce her experience to a mere diagnostic label; in fact, we readily grant that cultural and religious explanations account for much of her behavior."²⁶ But I would add that as we will see in the chapters ahead, there are many more potential diagnostic categories to consider without having to be dogmatic than the ones they mention, and some real moral issues as well.

I would argue that while many of the essential features of the disorders they refer to can be found in the life experience of Ellen White, hers was a very complex and confusing life journey, which was no doubt filled with fear, guilt, depression, both conscious and unconscious conflicts, continual moral dilemmas, and double binds that will continue to unfold in the pages that lie ahead. These can certainly not be explained by medical reductionism, or the weak defensive arguments of denominational apologetics. A historical, psychological, and spiritual approach works best. But when we are finished, without making a specific diagnosis, we will find fifty shades of pathology that are fascinating to explore in the light of her creative malady.

Questions

1. What is the evidence that Ellen actually benefitted tremendously from the rock injury she experienced at the age of nine?
2. What is the problem with reducing Ellen White's pathology to a physical injury or a medical condition?
3. Why are the vast majority of Adventists so grossly ignorant about their prophet's deficiencies, and how have they become a people of the lie?
4. Can we acknowledge that Ellen had some major mental and emotional problems without insisting on a specific diagnosis? And what about her major moral problems that unfold in the chapters ahead?



Joseph Bates

Courtesy of free pictures
SDA pioneers

CHAPTER 4

When Prophecy Fails Repeatedly!

It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected.

—Ellen White

The story is told of Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, a medieval Jewish rabbi and astrologer, who prophesied that the king of Sardinia, Charles Immanuel III, would see his favorite horse soon die. Sure enough, the horse died a short time later. The king was outraged at the astrologer, certain that his prophecy had brought about the horse's death. He summoned Moshe and commanded him, "Prophet, tell me when you will die!"

Moshe realized that the king was planning to kill him immediately no matter what answer he gave, so he had to answer carefully. "I do not know when I will die," he said finally. "I only know that whenever I die, the king will die three days later." Moshe lived for many years thereafter.

Prophecy can be a dangerous thing, and in Moshe's case, he was wise enough to realize when to say, "I don't know." The same cannot be said of the repeated date setting for the end of the world by Adventism's founders and greatest leaders. Prophecy failed so many times based on the "visions" of Ellen White that it is laughable, were it not so sad for those who know the true history of the movement.

The Big Three

The three cofounders of what would later become the Seventh-Day Adventist Church were Joseph Bates, James White, and Ellen Harmon-White. Later, we will see how James and Ellen conned Bates into accepting Ellen's visions. All three of these individuals were fully committed to the Millerite movement and completely convinced by Miller that the world would come to an end, first on October 22, 1843, and then on October 22, 1844. Miller himself and the followers who stayed with him after the

second disappointment at least acknowledged the folly of their date setting after the 1844 date passed. But the same cannot be said for the founders of the Adventist Church who would persist in even more outrageous date setting.

Joseph Bates was the oldest and initially the most influential of the three Adventist cofounders. Bates did not exhaust his bank account, as Adventists have claimed, but he did sell his farm to spread the news of Miller's prophecy before the Great Disappointment. However, he remained a wealthy man, which will become very important in the story that unfolds ahead.

Bates was credited with convincing both James and Ellen White of the truth of the Seventh-Day Sabbath in 1845, which was presented to him by the Seventh-Day Baptists. But for our purposes in this chapter, Bates was also responsible for convincing James and Ellen White to embrace the seven-year theory, which would once again set a date for the end of the world, this time on October 22, 1851. But Bates was not considered to be a prophet, so it was left to Ellen to give divine credence to these views by her visions, which James and Bates held up before the little flock of believers.

Adventist leaders down through the decades have traditionally denied that Ellen's "visions" ever supported the shut-door theory or any kind of date setting that occurred after the Great Disappointment. This denial has largely been based on Ellen White's own words written in 1874. "With my brethren and sisters, after the time passed in forty-four I did believe no more sinners would be converted. But, I never had a "vision" that no more sinners would be converted."²⁷ This is blatantly untrue, as we will soon document. Given the intensity of Ellen's experience during this period, it seems highly unlikely that her memory failed her in this regard. Nor do I believe that she was necessarily deliberately lying in her 1874 testimony. More likely, her experience is a classic example of two psychological phenomena, cognitive dissonance and true-believer syndrome. The theory of cognitive dissonance was set forth by Leon Festinger, an American social psychologist, to "describe the formation of new beliefs and increased proselytizing in order to reduce the tension, or dissonance that results from failed prophecies."²⁸

The Shut-Door "Vision"

In the case of the earliest Adventists (who would later become SDAs), the new beliefs came first, which included the shut-door theory, Hiram Edson's cornfield "vision" the day after the Great Disappointment, the Seventh-Day Sabbath, holy kisses and foot washing, and the seven-year theory that Christ would return on October 22, 1851. Active proselytization would not kick in until the first two versions of the shut-door theory and the final prophecy of the end of the world—the seven-year theory—had failed. Then, Adventists would become increasingly aggressive about proselytizing to move away from this period where prophecy failed repeatedly. "True-believer syndrome" is a term used by M. Lamar Keene in his 1976 book *The Psychic Mafia*. Keene used the phrase to refer to people who continued to believe in a paranormal event or phenomenon even after it had been proven false or proven to have been staged.

In an extreme cult, true believers drink the poison Kool-Aid. The early Adventists may not have qualified as an extreme cult, but they were definitely true believers. It was the Advent believers who would later become SDAs who refused to let go of Miller's prophecies, even when he, himself, rejected them and confessed that his date setting was an error. The true-believer syndrome is personified by Ellen White and those who presumed to set a third date for the end of the world after the first two dismal failures had occurred. While this little band of Adventists were being mocked and ridiculed for believing the world would end on October 22, in both 1843 and 1844, these true believers now had the gall to insist that Christ would return on October 22, 1851. The first indication of this belief in Ellen White came as part of her first "vision" in December of 1844, which included both the notion that God had revealed the time of His coming and that probation had closed—the door of mercy was shut for the wicked world.²⁹

Soon we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus' coming.

Others rashly denied the light behind them and said that it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out, leaving their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and lost sight of the mark and of Jesus, and fell off the path down into the dark and wicked world below. It was just as

impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected.

Ellen White also describes the Second Coming of Christ as occurring during her lifetime in this “vision”. And it should be noted that the content of the “vision” had been published in a paper written by Joseph Turner, an Adventist editor, who authored the shut-door theory with his fellow editor, Apollos Hale, at this same time. Ellen White claimed that she had not read the paper, even though she admitted that a copy of it was known to be in her house, before she had her “vision”. This is seen as way more than coincidence to Ellen White critics, and even Turner seemed to be amazed that her “vision” so closely mirrored what he had written and shared in a meeting the night before. Ellen White describes the strange circumstances in these words.

At the time I had the vision of the midnight cry [her first vision] I had given it up in the past and thought it future [the shut door], as also most of the band had. I know not what time J. Turner got his paper. I knew he had one out and one was in the house, but I knew not what was in it, for I had not read a word of it. After I had the vision and God gave me light, he bade me deliver it to the band, but I shrank from it, I was young, and I thought they would not receive it from me... The very next morning Joseph Turner called, said he was in haste going out of the city in a short time, and wanted I should tell him all that God had shown me in vision. It was with fear and trembling I told him all. After I had got through he said, he had told out the same last evening.³⁰

It is important at this point to recognize that the shut-door theory and the seven-year theory naturally went hand in hand. If you are going to teach that probation has closed (the shut-door theory), it is only logical to believe that Christ’s return would follow very shortly. It is very awkward to have an extended close of probation. Ellen White not only believed in both for several years after the Great Disappointment, but also had “visions” which connected these beliefs to God. Her insistence that she did not have such “visions” many years later is understandable in the context of cognitive

dissonance. To admit that she had such “visions” would compromise her prophetic gift and expose the “visions” as being false, especially in the “all or nothing” view of prophecy that was held by these early Adventists.³¹ But we will carefully unpack both the shut-door and seven-year theories from William Miller to Ellen White in the remaining pages of this chapter.

After William Miller failed to predict the end of the world for the second time in 1844, it is interesting to note that he immediately gave up on date setting, but he did not initially reject the notion of a shut door or close of probation. Less than a month after the Great Disappointment, Miller penned the following words in a letter that, soon thereafter, was published in the *Advent Herald*: “We have done our work in warning sinners, and in trying to awake a formal church. God, in His providence has shut the door; and we can only stir one another up to be patient; and be diligent to make our calling and election sure.”³²

Millerites who were not sure about this shut-door position were generally viewed with suspicion and labeled backsliders. A very prominent Millerite, S. S. Snow, considered all in the Advent movement who did not embrace the shut-door view to be Laodiceans, whom Christ would “spue out of his mouth.”³³ But Snow’s passion for Miller’s message and condemnation for all who didn’t accept him led him to greater and greater fanaticism. He soon believed that God had bestowed him with a great prophetic mantel, that he was the last-day Prophet Elijah, and that “rejecting him was tantamount to rejecting Christ.” Miller became increasingly concerned with the fanaticism that seemed to surface all around him, including what he saw among his former followers who would go on to form the SDA Church.

Holy Hugs, Kisses, and Insanity

Bates and the Whites came to believe that one purpose for the gap between the shut door and the Second Coming was for God’s elected people to rediscover and readopt long-forgotten biblical practices. These included greeting each other with a holy hug and a holy kiss, and washing one another’s feet (practices God showed Ellen in her first “vision” and Joseph Turner referred to in his paper); keeping the Jewish commandments and laws—especially the Seventh-Day Sabbath (again confirmed by Ellen in

“vision” showing the fourth commandment to be above the rest).³⁴ But Miller was not impressed with these tests and called the Albany Conference in the spring of 1845 to now denounce all forms of the shut-door doctrine and to reject the Jewish and unbiblical practices of the Sabbatarian Adventists.

It is resolved that we have no fellowship with any of the new tests as conditions of salvation... That we have no fellowship for Jewish fables and commandments of men, that turn from the truth, or for any of the distinctive characteristics of modern Judaism. And that the act of promiscuous footwashing and the salutation kiss, as practiced by some professing Adventists as religious ceremonies...are not only unscriptural, but subversive—if persevered in—of purity and morality.³⁵

Joshua Himes, Miller’s closest associate, summed up the main resolutions from the conference in the *Morning Watch*, dismissing the Sabbatarian Adventists with these words: “It is a singular and mournful fact that fanaticism inevitably runs into acts that are in the first stage, *doubtful*, and in the next *licentious*.” The seventeen-year-old Ellen found herself surrounded by desperate adults who placed extreme expectations on her prophetic gift, while they were viewed as people of dubious reputation. Fanaticism and mental instability, among disappointed Adventists, were such a problem after the Great Disappointment that both public perception and professionals who assessed the situation were extremely concerned. The newspapers published many stories of disappointed Adventists committing suicide or being committed to insane asylums.³⁶

One physician, Dr. Amariah Brigham, who was the superintendent of the New York Lunatic Asylum in Utica, “attributed the insanity of thirty-two patients in three northern asylums to Millerism, which he regarded as a greater threat to the country than yellow fever or cholera.”³⁷ Ellen White herself even acknowledged that she knew of Millerites who went insane after the Great Disappointment, and that she herself struggled mightily with some of the same feelings and experiences.

After the passing of the time in 1844, fanaticism in various forms arose... I went into their meetings. There was much

excitement, with noise and confusion... Some appeared to be in vision, and fell to the floor... As the result of fanatical movements such as I have described, persons in no way responsible for them have in some cases lost their reason. They could not harmonize the scenes of excitement and tumult with their own past precious experience; they were pressed beyond measure to receive the message of error; it was represented to them that unless they did this they would be lost; and as a result their mind was unbalanced, and some became insane.

Ellen goes on to say that during this same period she experienced a number of “visions” and fell to the floor often, in such mental turmoil that “for two weeks my mind wandered,” an experience that she would later call her “extreme sickness.” Therefore, Ellen felt a certain empathy for the “many inmates of insane asylums” who “were brought there by experiences similar to my own.”³⁸ This is a lot for anyone, much less a seventeen-year-old, to handle. So, given the ridiculous pressures she was exposed to during this period of her life, it is not surprising that years later she would reframe her experience, visions, and views in a context that preserved her power, position, and authority in a movement that she consciously or subconsciously considered to be her own.

But, let us further explore how the shut-door and seven-year theories played out in her actual experience. Adventist leaders have traditionally claimed that Ellen White held to the false view of the shut-door theory for a very short time after the Great Disappointment, and that it was corrected by her first vision.

This has been largely based on her 1883 statement.

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. It was the light given me of God that corrected our error, and enabled us to see the true position.³⁹

And they argue that once the Sabbath truth was discovered that the shut-door theory quickly faded away. But the evidence will not support either of these claims. We have already noted that early on, Ellen White claimed that

at the time she had her first “vision”, she and most of the believers in her little band had begun to come to the conclusion that the shut door (or closing of probation) was still in the future, and had not started in the past. But the truth is that it was her “vision” and the shut-door theory of Turner and Hale (which agreed with the “vision”—or vice versa) that caused these early Adventists to firmly hold on to the belief that probation had closed for Millerites who had lost their faith, along with “all the wicked world.” In other words, the evidence shows that the truth of what happened is the exact opposite of what Ellen claimed in 1883, and that her “vision” upheld the shut-door and close-of-probation view, rather than correcting it. Based on all we will see, I am not convinced that Ellen was even trying to tell the truth in 1883. She may have been deliberately lying, with all that she had at stake. But if she wasn’t lying, she was psychologically deluded.

Seventh-Day Door Shutters

The idea that the acceptance of the Seventh-Day Sabbath in 1845–1846 from Rachel Oakes Preston of the Seventh-Day Baptists, and confirmed by Ellen’s visions, somehow phased out the shut-door doctrine is also highly inaccurate. Between 1844 and 1849, the shut-door doctrine became firmly established in the theology and thinking of Sabbatarian Adventists and was coupled with the Seventh-Day Sabbath as the two critical pillars of the movement’s identity. This is why friends and foes alike would often refer to these forerunners of the SDA Church as shut-door Sabbatarians, or the Seventh-Day door shutters.” Those who wanted to be even more descriptive would use the attractive name, shut-door Seventh-Day Sabbath annihilationists.⁴⁰ At least the church didn’t choose this name.

But if there is any question about how firmly the Sabbatarian Adventists were established in the shut-door doctrine throughout the 1840s, look no further than Ellen White’s own statements. As late as the year 1849, Ellen had additional “visions” which confirmed the validity of the shut-door doctrine, challenging those with doubts to reestablish their faith. While in Topsham, Maine, she described a couple of “visions” on March 24, which buoyed up the believers in present truth. “God gave me two “visions” while there, much to the comfort and strength of the brethren and sisters. Brother Stowell was established in the shut door and all the present truth he had

doubted.” In August of the same year, she had another “vision” in which she was shown that the shut-door doctrine was on a par with the commandments of God.

I was shown that the commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ, relating to the shut door, could not be separated... My accompanying angel bade me look for the travail of soul for sinners as used to be. I looked, but could not see it, for the time of their salvation is past.⁴¹

So here we see Ellen White clearly supporting the shut-door belief as late as 1849, and attributing these views to “visions” from God, in direct contradiction to what she would later claim. Yet maybe her most disturbing statement about the shut door comes the next year when she not only condemns those who doubted and opposed the shut door, but also accused them of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, the unpardonable sin.

Then I saw the Laodiceans... Dare they admit that the door [of salvation] is shut? The sin against the Holy Ghost was to ascribe to Satan what belongs to God or what the Holy Ghost has done. They said the shut door was of the devil and now admit it is against their own lives. They shall die the death.⁴²

Moreover, her “visions” were also the source of her insistence that the world was rapidly coming to an end in 1849 and 1850. These “visions” seem to perfectly fit with Bates’s seven-year theory, published at this same time, that the world would come to an end on October 22, 1851.

I saw some, looking too far off for the coming of the Lord. Time has continued on a few years longer than they expected, therefore they think it may continue a few years more, and in this way their minds are being led from present truth, out after the world. In these things I saw great danger; for if the mind is filled with other things, present truth is shut out, and there is no place in our foreheads for the seal of the living God. This seal is the Sabbath. I saw that the time for Jesus to be in the most holy place was nearly finished, and that time can last but a very little

longer; and what leisure time we have should be spent in searching the Bible, which is to judge us in the last days.⁴³

The next year, Ellen would make even more explicit statements showing that her “visions” seemed to perfectly harmonize with Bates’s seven-year theory.

In a view given June 27, 1850, my accompanying angel said, “Time is almost finished. Do you reflect the lovely image of Jesus as you should?” Then I was pointed to the earth, and saw that there would have to be a getting ready among those who have of late embraced the third angel’s message. Said the angel, “Get ready, get ready, get ready. Ye will have to die a greater death to the world than ye have ever yet died.” I saw that there was a great work to do for them, and but little time in which to do it (*Early Writings*, 64).

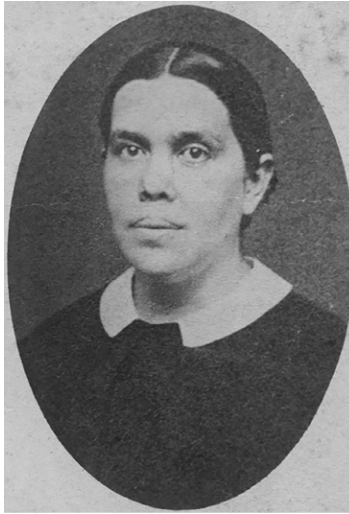
Some of us have had time to get the truth, and to advance step by step, and every step we have taken has given us strength to take the next. But now time is almost finished, and what we have been years learning, they will have to learn in a few months. They will also have much to unlearn, and much to learn again (*Early Writings*, 67).

Talk about a guilt trip. You better get your act together because the world is only going to last for a few more months, God showed me! The pathology of this whole period is difficult to overstate. And the pathology of the Adventist leadership which has tried to deny what occurred down through the ages is equally striking. From a psychological perspective, this goes beyond just cognitive dissonance. Clearly, it includes cognitive dissonance—the notion that the more invested we are in a particular belief, the greater the extremes we will go to, to advocate that belief. But when these kinds of beliefs are resulting in mental illness and even suicide, as was the case with many Millerite Adventists who were subjected to such fanaticism, one has to question whether the early Advent movement didn’t qualify as an extreme cult. Again, in this chapter, we see Ellen White appealing to her sickness to try to explain the confusion and conflict she herself experienced dealing with the chaos that surrounded her.

However, the most pathological aspect of Ellen White's role during this period has to be her God-attributed condemnation and retribution upon those who dared to disagree with her in relation to the shut door. These were people who had the discernment to oppose a heresy, and yet, she claims to see in "visions" that they are guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and consigned to hell. We will see similar retribution come against those who dared to challenge or disagree with the prophet in the chapters which lie ahead. But it is hard to escape the conclusion that Ellen White was the primary source of pathology for the early Sabbatarian Adventists who were led into the most extreme and bizarre beliefs when *prophecy failed repeatedly!*

Questions

1. Would Adventism have ever survived, much less thrived, without the claimed and promoted “visions” of Ellen White? What role did her “visions” play in establishing the shut door and the seventh-day Sabbath?
2. Does it seem likely, based on the evidence, that Ellen even plagiarized her first vision, on the shut door?
3. What do you make of the insanity and suicide connected to Millerism/Adventism?
4. Which was worse, perpetuating the shut-door theology, based on Ellen’s “visions,” or the condemnation she heaped on those who denied this doctrine?



Ellen G. White, circa 1859

Courtesy of the Ellen White Estate

CHAPTER 5

Infeariority—Never Good Enough!

I saw that Jesus prayed for his enemies; but that should not cause us to pray for the wicked world, whom God has rejected.

—Ellen White

The story is told of a boy and his father who were walking through the woods together. They came across a large log, blocking their path. The boy turned to his father and said, “Do you think I can lift this log, Dad?” The father replied, “If you use all your strength, absolutely you can.” The boy rolled up his sleeves, bent his knees, and got his hands under the log. He locked his arms and heaved with every ounce of strength he had. But the log wouldn’t budge. He tried over and over again until at last, exhausted and breathless, he gave up. He looked at his dad with disappointment and frustration and said, “You told me I could lift it!” His dad smiled and said gently, “I told you, you could lift it if you used all your strength. *You didn’t ask me for help.*”

Your strength isn’t held by you alone, but also by those who march alongside you, including God. When you feel inadequate to the task in front of you, perhaps it is simply because you aren’t using all your strength. Ellen White felt a lot of fear as a young person, and much of this was because she had an unhealthy picture of God. The God she conceived of was itching to send people to hell, including her, and the “visions” He gave her reflected this judgment and condemnation. We saw in the last chapter how the “visions” of Ellen White were instrumental in supporting both the shut-door doctrine and the seven-year theory in early Adventism until the October 22, 1851, date finally passed. At this point, after three strikes, the Advent leaders mercifully gave up on specific date setting and the shut-door theory, and attempted to save face. However, it is very important to note that the shut door, or close of probation, was maintained by Ellen White right up until the seven-year theory expired and Christ failed to come again. And she would continue to have “visions” claiming time was too short to get

married or own property well into the future, as we shall see in later chapters.

Too Late for the Wicked World

As late as June 21 of 1851, Ellen claimed that she was shown in “vision” that the fate of the wicked was sealed and that God’s people were not to pray for the “ungodly” or the “wicked world.”

I saw that Jesus prayed for his enemies; but that should not cause us to pray for the wicked world, whom God has rejected. When he prayed for his enemies there was hope for them, and they could be benefited and saved by his prayers, and also after he was a mediator in the outer apartment for the whole world; but now his spirit and sympathy were withdrawn from the world; and our sympathy must be with Jesus, and must be withdrawn from the ungodly.⁴⁴

But as the summer passes and the date approaches, the Advent leaders become mysteriously silent about the shut door and the end of the world. And when the fateful date passes again, they rush to publish a small book in the fall of 1851 to steer their followers in yet a new direction. This sixty-four-page booklet was entitled *Experience and Views*, and except for the first seven introductory pages, it was copied directly from two other sources. One was their broadside entitled *A Word to the Little Flock*, and the second was Ellen’s “vision” and articles in the *Present Truth*. The catch was that all references to the shut door were omitted without notation or explanation. The only other omission was Ellen White’s counsel, again based on a “vision” to “avoid earthly physicians.”

It is understandable that there would be great embarrassment connected to promoting both the shut door and the end of the world for so many years without fruition. But the real theological risk and psychological fear was related to the fact that these false doctrines had been directly based on Ellen White’s visions. So, the first order of business was to erase and deny any record of these “visions” as soon as possible to restore confidence among the true believers. Even to this day, the record of these “visions” can only be viewed by those who get special permission to enter the Ellen White

vaults. The second order of business was to redefine the shut-door doctrine once again, for a third and final time, and to attempt to rename it in the Adventist theology of the day. Finally, with the original shut-door and seven-year theories now dead, the third order of business was to fully pursue the last dimension of the true-believer syndrome that we identified in chapter 4. And that was to distract believers from the failures of the past by fully investing themselves in proselytizing new believers. In 1851, when the close of probation theology ended, it is estimated that only about 150 believers belonged to the Adventist “little flock,” but when the SDA Church officially organized 12 years later, the official membership was 3,500.

The Adventist Watergate

So, Ellen White and the Adventist leadership quickly went from teaching that the shut door was an essential doctrine of Sabbatarian Adventism, and that those who rejected it were guilty of the unpardonable sin, to covering it up. From insisting that the Second Coming was going to be realized on October 22, 1851, to never mentioning these doctrines again after the date passed, and deleting their past writings on these subjects from all past publications that were reprinted. The biggest exception to this would be Ellen White’s false prophecy about the Second Coming in 1856, which we will discuss in a later chapter. But this “cover up and deny” tactic has been the official position of the SDA Church leadership since its inception. And given how effective the cover-up has been, it is not surprising that so many Adventists have exercised ignorance and denial with regard to their early history. But how could the believers who lived through this fiasco not question Ellen White’s prophetic authority? The answer is they did, repeatedly, as we will see in the remainder of this chapter and in chapter 9.

It is no coincidence that James White quit publishing the “visions” of Ellen in the church paper, the *Review and Herald*, in the late summer of 1851. There is good evidence that James resented the increasing attention that Ellen’s “visions” were giving her, that he wasn’t as convinced of the seven-year theory as his wife was and her “visions” supported, that the couple was experiencing unprecedented marital tensions, and that an ever-increasing number of believers were also beginning to complain about

contradictions with the visions, which only increased after the October 22 date passed. The solution to the failure of the seven-year theory with its accompanying shut door and close of probation was to place Ellen on the sidelines and keep her out of church publications, to remove her past “visions” that supported these theories from older publications that were reprinted, and to combat criticism by formulating new doctrines and encouraging a new emphasis on evangelism.

The first doctrine that had to be immediately reformulated after the 1851 date passed was the Sanctuary Doctrine. It should also be noted that this is the only Sabbatarian Adventist doctrine that is original to the SDA subculture, or that was not borrowed from others. Initially, when Hiram Edson had his cornfield “vision” one day after the Great Disappointment (October 23, 1844), the two-compartment sanctuary in heaven was believed to fit perfectly with the shut-door theory. Christ had entered the most holy place and the final judgment was about complete. But this interpretation was clearly lacking by the time the seven-year theory expired, in spite of Ellen’s “visions” endorsing both theories. So, a new interpretation was desperately needed.

The Deadly Investigative Judgment

The Sabbatarian Adventist leaders began to reexamine Edson’s and O. R. Crosier’s Sanctuary Doctrine after the seven-year theory failed, and not only discarded the shut door and close of probation, but also gradually redefined the shut door into a new phrase that Joseph Bates used for the first time, “the investigative judgment.” (And because it was a doctrine endorsed by Ellen’s visions, Desmond Ford, one of my favorite SDA theologians, would later be defrocked by the church for proving this doctrine to be unbiblical.) Bates, J. N. Loughborough, and Uriah Smith together systematized this doctrine, tying it to the sanctuary teaching of Crosier and the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14, despite the initial rejection of the doctrine by James White.

Bates took the lead in developing the doctrine of the investigative judgment, which taught that the judgment of the living started with Adventists (who knew more than everybody else) because “judgment begins with the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17). Probation would close for

each individual whose name would come up in the investigative judgment requiring the elimination of sin in their lives, until the Second Coming. In other words, if you sinned after your name came up in the judgment, you were lost (this was still being taught when I grew up in Adventism).

This emphasis on perfectionism made the investigative judgment a very deadly and guilt-producing doctrine. Not only was it unbiblical, it was anti-biblical in its direct contradiction of the New Covenant Gospel, Christ's perfect finished work on the cross, and God's amazing grace.

But once again, what gave this doctrine divine credence in the minds of Adventists was the confirming "visions" of Ellen White, which were once again being published in the *Review and Herald* (the official church paper) by 1855, under the new editor Uriah Smith, who had replaced James White. Ellen's "visions" made it clear that once "God ceases his work in the heavenly sanctuary" for us, we will have to live with "no mediator between God and man." She warns of a "terrible time of trouble" that will follow this judgment, and that "every sin must be overcome before it starts." And it is Ellen White who writes, on the one hand, based on her "visions" that "true Christians will never indulge the thought that they are sinless," while, on the other hand, insisting that "sinlessness" is a state that God expects us to attain in this life.⁴⁵

Ellen's Theophobia

The common denominator, psychologically, in all of this is fear. Even as a young girl, we have noted that Ellen had an intense fear of being rejected by God. This theophobia (not to be confused with a healthy fear [reverence] for God taught in scripture) is always a sign of unhealthy spirituality and religion. So, what we have seen so far in the experience of Ellen White and the early Adventists is an unhealthy obsession with theophobia and religion that produces fear. If you go to phobialist.com, you will find more than five hundred phobias defined, and hadephobia—or the fear of hell and eternal punishment—is the one that not only applied best to early Adventism, but also too much of the religious world today. The following is a review and summary of this fear in Ellen and Adventism, documented so far.

<i>Fear-Producing Experience or Event</i>

Ellen's first major spiritual memory was a terrifying fear of being lost.
After her injury, Ellen wished to die, but feared she would be lost.
Ellen joined the apocalyptic Millerite movement, fearing the end of all things.
Ellen went through the fear and trauma of being disfellowshipped.
She identified with the fear of Millerites who went insane or committed suicide.
Ellen's first vision used fear of the shut door to influence believers.
She had many more fear-producing visions confirming the shut door.
She also had fear-producing visions predicting the end of time again.
Her visions confirmed the fear-based investigative judgment (perfectionism).
She had to live with ongoing fear that her visions would be exposed as untrue.

Fear and inferiority go together. Ellen's early fears were tied to her own feelings of inferiority, that God had rejected her. She joined the Millerite movement because she feared that those who didn't were lost. She was removed from the Methodist Church because her fear drove her to be divisive. She and her parents feared that the Methodists would be lost if they didn't join Millerism. Outwardly, they claimed to be the true remnant who would be saved, but inwardly their worst fears came to pass when their prophecy failed and they were scorned, feeling more inferior than ever. The only antidote for this inferiority and fear was to turn the table on their mockers, insisting they were lost because their probation had closed, and instilling fear in those who were considering leaving the group with their shut-door theology.

When the house of cards finally collapsed after the October 22, 1851 date passed, Ellen was filled with fear because her "visions" and prophecies had failed. The other Adventist leaders who had supported her "visions" also feared that their positions were in jeopardy, so they did everything they could to deny and cover up what had transpired. They also put Ellen White on the sidelines for four years, in an attempt to let the controversy blow

over. But fear-based religion is fear-based religion, so when they set their minds to create a new doctrine to replace the old shut-door doctrine, they once again appealed to the people's fears. A demanding God would insist that they never sin again (perfectionism) once their names came up in the investigative judgment, so the believers were held once more by guilt and fear. Anyone subjected to such an unhealthy theology would be forced to embrace either inferiority or delusion.

In the meantime, Ellen White is seeing her "little flock" become a sizable family. And she has learned, from the sidelines, that it is unsafe to project "visions" on to God that can be proven wrong. So, her "visions" in the future will be much less frequent and much safer. From this point on, it becomes her practice to take her theological "visions" from other prominent writers, and to try to ensure that her testimonies, "visions" used to rebuke other church members, could not be proven wrong. A goal that she did not always reach, as we shall see in many of the chapters that follow.

But in the remainder of this chapter, I want to try to unpack the psychological dynamics that appear to be at work in the role Ellen played in the establishment of formative Adventist doctrines.

The seven most foundational teachings of Adventism all begin with an S and emerged in the following order.

Seven Visionary Doctrines

- 1842—Soon Second Coming (shut door originally included)
- 1844—Spirit of prophecy (Ellen White's prophetic role)
- 1845—Seventh-Day Sabbath (from Seventh-Day Baptists)
- 1845—State of the dead (soul sleep from George Storrs)
- 1846—Standards governing lifestyle (from a mix of sources)
- 1855—Sanctuary Doctrine as investigative judgment
- 1858—Systematic benevolence and stewardship (10 percent tithe)

We have already noted the role that Ellen's "visions" played with regard to the shut door and Second Coming, and how these "visions" which failed to come to pass nearly derailed her prophetic authority. But it was fortunate for Ellen White that her prophetic identity was integrally connected to the formation and survival of the "little flock." Had it not been for the divine

authority that she embodied, it is extremely unlikely that the SDA Church would have ever come into existence. The Advent leaders were clearly aware of this dynamic, and learned to protect Ellen's gift after the near shut-door fiasco and a number of other very embarrassing situations after that.

To underline this point, all we have to do is look at the Seventh-Day Baptists. They predated Adventists by two hundred years, and were the ones responsible for giving Adventists their Seventh-Day Sabbath. But today there are approximately five thousand SDBs in the United States and fifty thousand worldwide, while there are approximately one million SDAs in the United States and nearly twenty million worldwide. Why the difference? Because SDAs were led to believe that God was directly revealing their doctrines through His handpicked last-day prophetess. The Seventh-Day Baptists had no such trump card. While Adventists generally minimized or denied the charismatic gifts of the Spirit, Ellen White became the lone exception to this rule, and the secret to the movement's power and numerical success. And ironically, Ellen would teach, on the one hand, that belief in her writings was not to be made a "test of church membership" (*Evangelism* 358) and, on the other hand, that rejection of her testimonies would lead to "rejection of God" and amounted to "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit."

The Sabbath became the most important (marked by a halo) of the Ten Commandments, the "seal of God," the "identifying mark" of the "remnant church," and the center of Adventist theology, all because of Ellen White's visions.⁴⁶ It is fascinating to me as a theologian to see that God would "elevate" an Old Covenant law in such a manner, when His word says that this law written in stone is now a "ministry of death" (2 Corinthians 3:7) and a "ministry of condemnation" (2 Corinthians 3:9).

This demonstrates, much to the protests of Adventists, how the authority of Ellen White trumps and surpasses scripture with regard to any subject or any doctrine. Ellen and her fellow Advent leaders became increasingly aware of this power, and it became a source of great social and psychological tension and conflict, while breeding incredible theological and financial success (I am not suggesting that these leaders were primarily pursuing personal wealth, but as we shall see they were not oblivious to the financial benefits that would come their way).

Another example of this is the doctrine of soul sleep. The great majority of churches reject the notion of soul sleep, that the dead have no living spirit and are in a fully unconscious state. But both Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses embrace this doctrine and trace its origins in their movements to George Storrs, an influential Millerite preacher. Storrs was a former Methodist minister, and Miller himself did not support Storrs's views about the dead, which included annihilationism—the teaching that the lost are annihilated rather than consigned to an eternal hell. But Ellen Harmon-White, Joseph Bates, James White, and Charles Taze Russell, the founder of Jehovah's Witnesses, were all profoundly influenced by George Storrs's doctrines. They did not totally agree with him on everything, because Storrs taught that denominations and religious organizations were anathema. He insisted that a religious group became "Babylon the moment it organized."⁴⁷ And all four of these individuals, although they initially agreed, would then become founders of a denomination.

But once again, it is Ellen White's "visions" that promote the doctrines of soul sleep and annihilationism to an almost equal plane with the Sabbath. For she warns, she was shown in "vision" that "the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness" were the "two great errors" and "deceptions" which send their victims "with lightning speed to perdition."⁴⁸ This, of course, includes the vast majority of professed Christians. Ellen White, whose own experience was filled with fear, uses fear attributed to God and her "visions" to scare people into the SDA movement and keep them there, lest they fall into perdition. The role of fear in Adventism is huge, fear of the world, fear of other religions, especially charismatic ones, and unhealthy fear of God. And sadly, it can all be traced directly to Ellen White.

The two doctrines that we have not addressed are SDA standards and systematic benevolence (tithing). In both cases, the same pattern emerges. Ellen and the other Adventist leaders get their doctrines from others, but it is Ellen White's "visions" that give these doctrines their God-ordained authority. The only difference is that in the 1850s and later, the doctrines are safer, and they fit with cultural norms in the nineteenth century, as opposed to the 1840s when Ellen's "visions" endorsed the shut door, the holy kiss, foot washing, and the seven-year theory as necessary tests for salvation.⁴⁹

As far as standards were concerned, strict Sabbath keeping was required, and a host of activities were condemned, including those listed below.

Crazy Legalistic Standards

But as I discovered, while doing my doctoral dissertation at Claremont, nearly every activity or practice that Ellen now condemned from “visions” happened to be condemned by other Protestant churches at the time (the following is not an exhaustive list). But many of the items on it were there because Christians and health reformers of the day subscribed to a vital force view of physiology that we will explore later in the book.

Alcohol	Dancing	Use of makeup
Beards	Evolution	Masturbation
Bicycles	Fairs	Novel reading
Big cities	Petting	All cosmetics
Bonnets	Feminism	Labor unions
Bowling	Dominos	Perfume
Boxing	Football	Fancy ribbons
Gambling	Phonograph	Card playing
Catholics	Pornography	Higher criticism
Checkers	Homosexuality	Skating (ice and roller)
Chess	Theater	Horse racing
Jazz	Circus	Tobacco use
Croquet	Jewelry	Unchaperoned dating

Adventists not only took these condemnations more seriously than most other churches, because they were believed to be directly revealed by God, but they held on to many of these condemnations much longer than other denominations for the same reason. When I was growing up in Adventism, I remember many of these items still being condemned, along with living under the demands of strict Sabbath observance (a ridiculous number of dos and don'ts). Ironically the power of the prophet's pen caused many

Adventists to fearfully take her writings and warnings far more seriously than she did herself. For example, in spite of her strong condemning words against wearing jewelry, we know for a fact that Ellen wore several different kinds of jewelry on many different occasions.⁵⁰ And despite her many strong testimonies prohibiting the eating of “unclean” foods, there are a number of documented cases where Ellen ate such foods herself, even after her final health reform vision.⁵¹

What explains this hypocrisy? When you grow up with strong feelings of fear, insecurity, and inferiority, there tends to be a great need for approval seeking from others to make up for your own low self-concept. Approval seeking from others is the root of hypocrisy: “I can’t let others see who I really am, so I will hide it and pretend.” It is also to be expected that fear-based religion will generate fear-based religion. One way that Ellen White coped with her own fears was to use them to build a following of others who were controlled by fear. Hurt people hurt people.

And in the process of controlling others through fear, she was gradually able to become less fearful herself as she became more controlling of others. At the same time, she could project this control on to God, and therefore escape being accused of being a controlling person.

Finally, we come to the matter of money. The last major doctrine that Adventists embraced, in the late 1850s, was systematic benevolence or stewardship. At first, the Advent leaders seemed to follow a New Testament model, encouraging believers as Paul advised to set aside money on the first day of the week as the Spirit moved to help support the work of ministry. But when this failed to be lucrative enough, and the movement was actually in the process of organizing into a denomination, the leadership switched to an Old Testament model. In the spring of 1858, J. N. Andrews was asked to chair an exploratory committee by the Battle Creek Church to determine from scripture how Adventism could better support the work of the ministry. Andrews was a rising star in the Advent movement, and would become its best known missionary and most influential Sabbath historian and theologian. In his excellent new book on Andrews, Gil Valentine shows how Andrews became the second most influential man in Adventism next to James White himself. But ultimately the Whites would badly mistreat Andrews, as they did to all leaders who seemed to threaten them.

But with regard to stewardship and tithing, Andrews and James were on the same page. The committee laid the groundwork for the Whites to bring in a tithing system that in many ways would be the secret to Adventism's success. By the 1860s, James White and other leaders argued that since they were keeping an Old Covenant Sabbath, consistency demanded that they practice an Old Covenant 10 percent required tithe of all believers as well. When this did not go over easily, it was initially voted down by the church, leadership appealed to their ace in the hole once again.

Ellen just happened to have another "vision" which provided a much-needed "Thus saith the Lord" for skeptics and doubters, and kept the saints in the straight and narrow way. She warned Adventists that those who failed to pay at least a faithful 10 percent tithe were guilty of "defrauding, robbing, and embezzling from God" and, in so doing, "are robbing themselves of the eternal riches" of heaven. The divine law had to be kept, or one would pronounce a "curse" on the self and be "lost for eternity."⁵² No wonder Adventists pay tithe more faithfully than any other church.

Once again, fear won the day. The divine requirements relayed from God's mouth to Ellen's pen were incredibly lengthy and burdensome. No human being could keep them, including Ellen herself, but they were the basis of Adventist identity, faith, and practice and, to a great degree, still are, which is why one author has rightly observed that to grow up Adventist is to be "never good enough."⁵³ To me, it is obvious that Ellen grew up feeling never good enough, and as the old saying goes, misery loves company. By projecting her anger on to God and projecting her fear on to fellow believers, she was able (thanks to a faulty Old Testament view of prophecy in Adventism) to gain great status, control, prestige, and power, which would ultimately produce a worldwide following of twenty million believers, who in their *inferiority* are never good enough.

Questions

1. What do you make of Ellen's assertions based on her "visions" that the door was shut and probation closed for the "wicked world"? Was this pathological?
2. What was worse, Ellen's condemnation of the world, insisting their probation was closed, or the cover-up and denial of the shut-door teaching that followed? What does this say about her psychology and morality?
3. Does the investigative judgment doctrine reflect Ellen White's strong theophobia, or deep-seated fearfulness relating to God? Was her fear pathological?
4. Is it possible that the unbiblical doctrines and in many cases bizarre standards that Ellen claimed she received in "visions" actually came from God? If so, what kind of God was this?



James White

Courtesy of Free Pictures SDA Pioneers

CHAPTER 6

The Game of the Name

I am just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision, as in having the vision.

—Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*

The story is told of a couple who were invited to celebrate the fiftieth wedding anniversary of another couple they hadn't seen for years, but had known since high school and who had been very close friends. Every time the host needed something, he would address his wife with some endearing name. "My love... My darling... My sweetheart... Honey..." etc. But other than that, the host said very little during the meal. So, after dinner when the two men were alone, the visiting friend said, "You have sure changed over the years. I couldn't help but notice that you were constantly addressing your wife with the most endearing terms. Is that your secret to staying married for fifty years?" "No," responded the man, shaking his head with embarrassment, "the truth is that recently I've forgotten her name."

If you've ever seen a family member go through the stages of senility or dementia, as I have, you witness how they play the game of the name, when they forget names they have known for years. But in this chapter, I explore the role that Ellen White played in the battle that Adventists experienced choosing a name and deciding rather they would organize into a denomination. Ellen White had a sound mind throughout her lifetime until she died in 1915, but she also had a very conflicted mind. In the last two chapters, we noted how the heavy prophetic expectations placed on her helped lead her to make prophetic pronouncements about the shut door, close of probation, and seven-year theory that all proved to be totally false. Then we saw how these false prophecies led many to question her prophetic gift, led her husband to quit publishing her "visions" in the church paper, led to some major marital tensions between Ellen and her husband, and led to a major cover-up to protect her prophetic role.

The Christian Connection Movement

If these conflicts weren't enough, Ellen was also very conflicted with her other cofounder of the movement, Joseph Bates. Both Bates and her husband, James White, came out of a movement called the Christian Connection. This movement emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century, and it developed independently and simultaneously in various parts of the United States, and shared the following beliefs: church organization and denominationalism were of the devil. This belief fit well with the Millerite later view that the denominations were Babylon. But although they were anti-organization, they did agree on a few general doctrines. One was anti-Trinitarianism, and the teaching that Jesus was not fully God. Both James and Bates believed that the doctrine that Jesus was God was an "absurdity" and totally unbiblical,⁵⁴ a position they would hold to until their deaths.

Second, the Connectionists believed strongly in character development through obedience to the Ten Commandments or Old Covenant Law, which went along with their rejection of the substitutionary atonement or the perfect finished work of Christ. They were generally hard-core legalists and perfectionists, and Ellen's early "visions" strongly supported these positions. This also conflicted with the Methodist doctrine that was generally orthodox on the gospel. But Ellen became connected with the more law-based shouting Methodist branch of the church. And finally, the Connectionists were social reformers. They were strongly involved in the temperance movement (which would evolve into prohibition) and the anti-slavery movement, which Ellen also supported in spite of the racist views she claimed to receive from God, that we will explore later.

But even though Joseph Bates, James White, and Ellen Harmon-White were the cofounders of the Advent movement, James and Bates held to basic foundational views about the atonement and the nature of Christ that were in conflict with orthodox Christianity, and the mainline Methodist doctrine which Ellen had been exposed to growing up. As was mentioned in the last chapter, Bates, James, and Ellen were all profoundly influenced by the doctrine and teaching of George Storrs, and were all initially in agreement with Storrs that the denominations were Babylon, which increasingly became the doctrine of Millerism. This was also the position of

the Christian Connection, which Bates and James White came out of. Obviously, the Methodists didn't teach this, but when Ellen was disfellowshipped by the Methodist Church, after joining the Millerite movement, she, too, held to the view that the denominations were Babylon.

The Visions' Pro and Con on Organization

Yet, ironically, Ellen, James, and Bates would be the leading proponents of organization and becoming a denomination when this debate erupted in the Sabbatarian Adventist movement. This was an area that the three cofounders could agree on, and change their previous position on, because they all had a lot to lose if the movement rejected organization. They were still the recognized leaders of the movement, even though their leadership had been strongly questioned in the early 1850s. But as the decade progressed, their leadership positions strengthened, and they became the leading voices calling for organization against the equally strong anti-organization voices that were still very present in the movement. If Adventism evolved into the loose-knit kind of structure that characterized the Christian Connection, James and Ellen White had the most to lose, in terms of power and control over the movement. Bates was already in his seventies when the Adventist Church officially organized, and would die by the age of seventy-nine.

Ellen, by contrast, was only in her midthirties when the church organized, and would live another fifty-two years beyond organization, while her sickly husband would die thirty-four years before her. So, Ellen was the cofounder who clearly had both the most to gain, by organization, and the most to lose, if the movement chose not to become a denomination. I am not suggesting that any of these three cofounders were primarily greedy or self-seeking in their leadership. James White turned down the honor of becoming the first General Conference president by unanimous vote, for the very reason that he didn't want to be perceived as making "a calculated grab for personal power," after his "forceful campaign for organization."⁵⁵ But Ellen was the mother of the movement. She was believed to be gifted with supernatural "visions" that gave her tremendous influence in Adventism, she had struggled with strong feelings of inferiority

much of her life, and she would be left as the sole cofounder and matriarch of the movement once Bates and her husband died.

So is it really any wonder that when the movement erupted into a major civil war over the subject of organization that she was willing to reverse her previous belief (visions) during the Millerite movement, that the denominations were Babylon, and embrace the exact opposite position (also attributed to visions). As we noted in the last chapter, every shift in the development of Adventist doctrine was first promoted by Joseph Bates and/or James White, and then confirmed by a “vision” from Ellen White, even when these beliefs proved to be totally wrong and inaccurate. Ellen White’s “visions” confirmed the shut-door and seven-year theory before they proved to be false, and then were used to deny these teachings after they proved to be wrong. And the same can be said for Adventist practice, with regard to church organization. Ellen’s “visions” were largely the basis for rejecting the notion of organization before 1853, but after 1853, when Bates and James reversed their positions on the subject, Ellen began to have “visions” showing that this new position was God’s will. This pattern would continue in Adventism with regard to both doctrine and practice until both Bates (1872) and James (1881) were dead.

What is particularly troubling is that even with doctrines as central and foundational as the Trinity and atonement, Ellen White’s “visions” or positions did not conflict with the heretical views of James and Bates until after they were both deceased.⁵⁶ Ellen White’s “visions” almost always mirror the beliefs and positions of Bates and her husband, even when they changed 180 degrees, until both of them were dead. With regard to church organization, Ellen White had at least 11 different “visions” over eight years (1844–1851),⁵⁷ which completely undermined and opposed the notion of church organization. These “visions” make it clear that Ellen White was fully convinced by her own revelations that the end of time was so near that church organization was a fruitless topic or a waste of time.

But between 1851 and 1853, after her “visions” about the shut door and Christ’s return were proven to be false, and Bates and her husband began to reverse their opposition to church organization, her “visions” on this subject suddenly began to change. An examination of the Ellen White index on the subject of church organization will turn up literally hundreds of statements supporting organization starting in the very year that Bates and James

reversed their positions on the topic. It is a little much to pretend that God was giving all these “visions” that contained overt heresies, falsehoods, and blatant contradictions. The enemies of organization were not slow to recognize the problems with Ellen’s “visions” and the self-serving nature of the change of positions that their leaders had taken. Yet, in spite of all this controversy, somehow the Whites and Bates won out. After much debate, Seventh-Day Adventists chose an official name in 1860, and three years later, the church was officially and legally organized in 1863.

Conflicts and Double Binds

However, before we look more carefully at the opposition to church organization, it is important to explore the continuing psychological dynamics that had to be occurring within Ellen White herself. In psychology, a double bind is defined as a situation in which a person is confronted with two irreconcilable demands or a choice between two undesirable courses of action. In many ways, Ellen White’s life can be described as one huge double bind, because at almost every stage of her development, she was confronted with irreconcilable demands. Let me try to review some of these up to the point of church organization, while recognizing that these double binds would continue to exist throughout the prophet’s life.

1. Even before her major injury, Ellen Harmon was a very conflicted person. She wanted to love God, but she was overwhelmed with a fear of God, a belief that God had rejected her, and that she was lost for eternity. Double bind: I’m supposed to be spiritual, but God has rejected me, and I can never be spiritually good enough.
2. After her injury, at the age of nine, her fear of being lost continues, and it is so great that even in severe depression she is afraid to die, even though she wants to see her life end. Double bind: my hopes and dreams have been dashed, so I don’t want to live, but if I die, I am lost for eternity.
3. In the shouting Methodist movement, she finally finds some spiritual freedom and acceptance, but this is short-circuited by

the end-of-the-world message of Millerism and expulsion from the Methodist Church. Double bind: I want to stay in the Methodist Church where I have finally found some acceptance, but if I do, I will be lost for eternity with all the condemned denominations.

4. Like all the other devastated Millerites who were deeply depressed and disappointed by the failure of Christ's return, Ellen didn't know what to do when the prophecy failed, except to believe that probation had closed, and all who believed they (the Millerites) were wrong were lost for eternity. Double bind: I'm part of a group that was clearly wrong, but if I leave this group, I am lost for eternity.
5. Ellen is a depressed seventeen-year-old stuck with a group of very devastated and depressed adults after the Great Disappointment, who look to her "vision" as their only hope. Double bind: everyone in my group has penned their hopes on my vision, but my "vision" confirms their narrow views of exclusion and condemnation of all outsiders.
6. Ellen Harmon-White has "visions" for seven years, which confirm their shut-door belief that probation has closed for everyone outside their group. Double bind: My "visions" tell me that probation has closed and Jesus is coming back any time, but He hasn't come back for nearly seven years. My "visions" don't match my experience.
7. Bates's seven-year theory gives Ellen White hope that the previous dilemma is finally going to be resolved, and Ellen has "visions" confirming the truth of this theory. Double bind: when the seven-year date passes and my "visions" have been proven false, I either have to admit I was wrong and lose my prophetic status, or lie and cover up the truth in a manner that is immoral.
8. When Ellen is faced with both Bates and her husband advocating heretical views about the nature of Christ and His atonement, she never confronts their heresy, but supports all of their errant and inconsistent positions. Double bind: either stand for theological truth and risk the rejection of Bates and my husband, or support their errant and inconsistent views, even with visions.

9. After rejecting the idea of church organization and denominationalism for more than ten years (1842–1853), through “visions” that spanned seven of those years, Ellen suddenly reverses her position when James and Bates change, and the “visions” follow suit. Double bind: if I now support organization, my former “visions” are shown to be false, but if I don’t, I lose the support of James and Bates and control of the movement I have mothered.

Continual double binds consistently follow Ellen White for the next fifty-three years after organization until her death. They always involve deceiving the people about her “visions” (living a lie) or risking exposure and losing her position and power in the Advent movement. In the chapters ahead, we will specifically explore many more of these double binds.

The Messenger Party

But back to organization. The Adventist civil war over church organization was not without its victims, casualties, and very negative consequences. It was this war that caused the first major schism in the Advent movement, producing its first offshoot group in 1853. This was not only the year that both James White and Joseph Bates reversed their course concerning church organization, moving from outspoken opponents of organization to its most vocal proponents, but it was the year that Ellen White also reversed her course on the subject with her “visions” now supporting organization. Two Adventist ministers, H. S. Case and C. P. Russell, were very concerned that Ellen’s “visions” had proved to be very unreliable, given what had transpired with the shut door, the seven-year theory, and now her reversal on church organization. But the issue would become very personal for them when the prophetess happened to visit their area during a church controversy. Case and Russell had found cause to discipline a female church member who had been engaging in verbal abuse.

Ellen White, who reviewed the case, endorsed the pastor’s actions after she had a “vision” from God, showing her that they were in the right. However, something changed, because one day later, Ellen claimed to have another “vision” which caused her to criticize the two ministers and their

handling of the case. This again is a pattern for Ellen White. She invariably tried to give her opinions divine credibility by attributing them to visions. This was particularly awkward when she would receive new information about a case or situation and have to reverse course, because God can't be wrong, so she would have to have another vision, showing that God had changed his mind. This did not go over well, especially with ministers like Case and Russell who were already convinced that Ellen's attributions to God were not adding up. There would be a countless number of Adventist leaders in the future who would come to the same conclusion, based on their own personal experience with the prophet. This would lead many of them to leave the church, or be expelled from the church.

In the case of Case and Russell, it was the latter option that occurred. When these ministers openly questioned the credibility of the prophet, they were both disfellowshipped from the Adventist community of believers. And from there, they went on to establish what was called the Messenger Party of believers,⁵⁸ the first official offshoot from Adventism. This group had two major criticisms of the Whites: (1) Ellen's "visions" were not reliable and should not have been made a test of fellowship, and (2) James White was guilty of gross mismanagement in church business practices and "embezzling church funds"⁵⁹ (these charges will be shown to be accurate in a later chapter). The accusations of Case and Russell generated significant controversy in Adventism and drew a number of influential people away from supporting the Whites, including such gifted ministers as D. P. Hall and J. M. Stephenson. Such attacks made the battle over church organization more difficult, to say the least, and tainted it with personal issues.

When things got personal with Ellen White, she seemed to always appeal to "visions" or divine guidance to put her detractors or enemies in their place. This, of course, put her critics at a severe disadvantage. It is very difficult to win an argument against God. By the same token, it is very hard to admit you are wrong when you are simply relaying God's views. For this reason, in spite of the voluminous number of pages and letters that Ellen wrote, it is almost impossible to find any cases where she openly admits that she was wrong, or openly apologizes to anyone, for anything. This is very troubling when you see the way she severely hurt a number of people (and in many cases innocent people) during her lifetime. I think it would be

fair to say that Ellen developed a God complex during her many years of prophetic ministry, which made it very difficult for her to differentiate between her own views and God's views. And even when her "visions" were proven wrong, she never seemed to have to be accountable for how she was misrepresenting God. To criticize her, for most Adventists, was to criticize God, and this dynamic unfortunately remains still too true in Adventism, even to the present.

Questions

1. What were the main cultic doctrines that were prominent in the thinking of the SDA cofounders, and what role did Ellen's "visions" play?
2. How could God show Ellen that church organization was Babylon and unthinkable, and then show her that it was necessary?
3. What are the most difficult double binds that Ellen White experienced, based on this chapter, in your opinion?
4. What were the main reasons the Messenger Party became disillusioned with Ellen White, her visions, and her husband?



Goodloe Harper Bell
Courtesy of Free Pictures SDA Pioneers



Ellen White addressing 1901 GC
Picture courtesy of Ellen G. White Estate

CHAPTER 7

Dreams of Dynasty

I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of light shining from the throne.

—Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*

The story is told of a pastor who was preaching the biblical truth that no one is perfect. He quoted text after text to make his case, and then to drive home his point in a very practical way, he asked for anyone who was perfect to stand up. A little lady in the congregation who had recently married a longtime member of the church in his fifties, whose wife had died a short time before, slowly stood to her feet in the middle of the congregation. The pastor stopped, extremely surprised, and asked, “Do you really think that you are perfect, ma’am?” The woman replied, “Oh, no! Far from it, Pastor. I’m not perfect. I’m standing up on behalf of my husband’s first wife!”

I don’t think James White was ever under the illusion that his prophetic wife was perfect. But there sure were a number in the Advent movement who thought she was the closest thing to it, based on her many professed visions. On the other hand, there was an increasing number, as we noted in the last chapter, who had become aware that her “visions” had often failed and that she was far from perfect. But after church organization finally got through and Seventh-Day Adventism was an official denomination, Ellen was in a much more comfortable place than she had been in for a long time. Her most strident critics in the Messenger Party had been disfellowshipped from the Adventist movement, and her marital tensions with James had been eased by their victory in the fight over organization. With the help of James and Bates, she had been able to cover up and bury her embarrassing errors related to the shut door, close of probation, and seven-year theory. The Advent movement was growing fast, and there was a new opportunity

to now focus on the future without fears of the end of the world hanging over their heads.

Accordingly, Ellen would look to more credible sources for the basis of her writings than the apocalyptic whims that had gotten her in trouble with the shut door and the end-of-the-world prophecies. But as we shall see, even some of these sources would prove to be quite bizarre and embarrassing from our perspective today. The areas that Ellen focused on, after organization was a done deal, were the following: (1) Health reform, based on the vital force physiology promoted by a number of the leading health reformers of the day. It is during this period that Ellen White will have her last major vision. (2) Holiness based on obedience to the Ten Commandments which was tied to the larger Holiness movement in the nineteenth century. Ironically, this emphasis on holiness by Ellen White would be accompanied by a de-emphasis on the Holy Spirit and the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. (3) A drive to establish educational and medical institutions. The schools would be built on the Christian perfectionism model of Goodloe Harper Bell. The medical clinics and hospitals would follow the health reform model, and move away from the radical faith healing that Ellen had previously espoused which denied the need for earthly physicians. (4) Ellen's shift from charismania to charisphobia.

Psychologically now, Ellen was in a safer place, because she could always point to established authorities, if need be, to support the credibility of her divine revelations. She could now shift her thinking from survival to establishing and growing an Adventist dynasty. And while she would instruct Adventists not to read books "containing error" or that were written by the "world" or "infidels" (non-Adventists), she would compile a large library filled with many such books and materials over her lifetime.⁶⁰ After all, it was believed that she had direct divine guidance that would give her the discernment to distinguish truth from error when reading the works of non-Adventists. However, from our perspective today, we can see that this simply wasn't the case. Let's start with her health reform message.

Health Reform and Vital Force

No sooner had Ellen, James, and Bates won their battle over church organization than Ellen had her most comprehensive vision, which also happened to be her last major vision. Her 1863 health reform “vision” was first written up in her book *An Appeal to Mothers*, but also published in segments in the SDA magazine, the *Health Reformer*. In chapter 5, we already noted a host of activities, beliefs, and practices that Ellen White condemned, based on her visions. A number of these forbidden practices were targeted on the basis of her health reform vision. Based on her supposed revelation, Ellen embraced the vital force physiology that was popular with health reformers outside of Adventism in the mid-nineteenth century. This philosophy, or worldview, maintained that each human being was born with a limited amount of vital force (men born with more than women). A number of behaviors or activities were also believed to be responsible for causing this vital force to decrease prematurely, causing a multitude of serious diseases, or to be completely depleted, causing premature death.

This theory was directly connected to what was believed to be the science of phrenology, which taught that the “animal organs” of the brain were located in the back lower part of the head and, when heated, caused vital force to be rapidly diminished. This is why Ellen concluded that it was her duty to warn mothers to protect their children against any form of sexual stimulation, as well as other practices that, from our perspective today, were 100 percent innocent. These included the wearing of bonnets, hair braids, wigs, hairpieces, hats, and hair buns, because these “deforming fashions” were believed to heat the base of the brain, draining vital force.

The artificial hair and pads covering the base of the brain, heat and excite the spinal nerves centering in the brain. The head should ever be kept cool. The heat caused by these artificials induces the blood to the brain. The action of the blood upon the lower or animal organs of the brain, causes unnatural activity, tends to recklessness in morals, and the mind and heart is in danger of being corrupted. As the animal organs are excited and strengthened, the morals are enfeebled. The moral and intellectual powers of the mind become servants of the animal. In consequence of the brain being congested its nerves lose their

healthy action, and take on morbid conditions, making it almost impossible to arouse the moral sensibilities. Such lose their power to discern sacred things. The unnatural heat caused by these artificial deformities about the head, induces the blood to the brain, producing congestion, and causing the natural hair to fall off, producing baldness. Thus the natural is sacrificed to the artificial. Many have lost their reason, and become hopelessly insane, by following the deforming fashion.⁶¹

Ellen White was no authority on health. She writes on this subject because she is claiming to give credence to these theories based on her divine revelations. God is showing her that everything from baldness to insanity is caused by wearing a hat, wig, bonnet, hair in a bun, etc. From what we know today, this is totally ridiculous, but Ellen attributes such ideas directly to God, and she not only got away with it, writing to the Adventists of her day, but also continued to maintain her status with Adventists today. Once she saw that such a dynamic was in place, it emboldened her to wax eloquent on virtually every subject, attributing the ideas she copied from others to God. Not only did she condemn the most innocent practices, but she also attacked the God-given gift of marital sexuality, if it occurred more often than once a month. Again, this wasn't her idea. It was borrowed directly from the vitalistic health reformers of the day, and then attributed to God.

Those whose intellectuality and morality are feeble, may spend their surplus vitality on this passion [sexual activity]...yet cannot cultivate their higher faculties while they thus revel on... red faced, bloated, coarse grained, gouty subjects—it matters little what becomes of them... But for light-built, fine-skinned, light-eyed persons, of either sex, to indulge, even in wedlock, as often as the moon quarters, is gradual but effectual destruction of both soul and body.⁶²

Onanism and Animalism

If you can condemn innocent and healthy activities, with such extreme language, it is not surprising that when it came to the masturbation phobia

of the nineteenth century, Ellen White had even much more extreme things to write. It was common for the Victorian health reformers of the last half of the nineteenth century to refer to masturbation as secret vice, self-abuse, onanism (after Onan in the Bible who spilled his seed on the ground), and even animalism. Adventists, like these other health reformers, were extremely critical of the established medical profession at the time, referring to medication as poison which counteracted vital force. Therefore, it is not surprising that they praised and republished an article written by a non-Adventist physician, W. R. Dunham, in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, lauding the natural healing powers of vital force within, and warning against practices which deplete the vital force.⁶³

Before Dunham, Ellen White was most influenced by Horace Mann and Millerite physician L. B. Coles in her beliefs about vital force. Coles argued that vital force was transmitted in the body by electrical impulses that traveled through the nervous system, and was very negatively impacted by sexual stimulation. And although this theory eventually proved to have no credibility in the science of phrenology, it was considered to be on the cutting edge of scientific thought by health reformers in the 1860s when Ellen White was so influenced by it.⁶⁴ And because women were granted less vital force than their male counterparts, Ellen considered them to be much less capable of absorbing the shock of sexual excitement in any form and especially with regard to solitary vice. In 1864, she appealed to mothers in these words, supposedly revealed to her by God.

Females possess less vital force than the other sex, and are deprived very much of the bracing, invigorating air, by their in-doors life. The results of self-abuse in them is seen in various diseases, such as cataracts, dropsy, headache, loss of memory and sight, great weakness in the back and loins, affections of the spine, the head often decays inwardly. Cancerous humor, which would lay dormant in the system their life-time, is inflamed, and commences its eating destructive work. The mind is often utterly ruined, and insanity takes place.⁶⁵

Ellen White, like most health reformers of her day, insisted on total abstinence when it came to the self-polluting practice of masturbation. But

this wasn't enough, because even sexual thoughts could have a devastating effect on one's supply of vital force. The nineteenth-century belief that male semen contained tremendous "vitalizing power," was demonstrated by the claim that "one ounce of it is [was] equal to forty ounces of blood in any other part of the body."⁶⁶ Therefore, even wet dreams, which were associated with lustful thoughts, were considered to be highly harmful and severely sinful. Young people were warned that they had to be pure while awake if they were to be pure in their sleep.⁶⁷ And females were not exempt from these warnings. Sexual thoughts and especially solitary vice were even more harmful to them, given their lower amount of vital force.

Females, although they do not lose semen, induce by this habit [self abuse] a discharge from the vagina which proves a terrible drain upon the system. This discharge, called "leucorrhoea" or "whites," is often the beginning of the most dreadful and fatal diseases. It is the precursor of congestion, inflammation, ulceration, tumors, and concerns of the womb.⁶⁸

There was a phobia about masturbation in the last half of the nineteenth century in America that can be seen by the fact that the Sears and Roebuck catalogue contained a large section of chastity belts that parents bought to protect their children from touching themselves at night. Ellen White was not alone in her fear that this practice was worse than almost any other. For some unknown reason, it was considered to be ten times more harmful than other sexual practices, including premarital promiscuity, general licentiousness, and extreme marital excess. Health reformer O. S. Fowler attempted to justify such a claim, by arguing that self-abuse caused impotency, great damage to the nervous system and sexual organs, and shameful self-abhorrence. Ellen endorsed his claims by quoting him in her book *A Solemn Appeal Relative to Solitary Vice and the Abuses and Excesses of the Marriage Relation*.

If asked what I should prefer a child of mine to practice [self-abuse vs other forms of sexual licentiousness], O merciful God! Deliver me from so dreadful a dilemma, my unequivocal answer would be, 'rather let my dear child DIE, be it even by revolting suicide or any other cup of bitterness sooner! Nothing, oh fond

parent, can render your beloved offspring more completely wretched!⁶⁹

Young men and women alike were filled with the most fear-producing guilt imaginable by these health reformers, and the parents who embraced their messages. What made it far worse, in the case of Ellen White, was that she was attributing these vital force ideas to “visions” from God, which caused such fears to linger in Adventism for years and decades, even up to the present after they had been totally debunked scientifically in the late nineteenth century. It is a very unhealthy picture of God that threatens young people with every form of physical disease and spiritual condemnation unless their thoughts and actions are perfectly pure. But as we have noted, Ellen grew up with a fear-based picture of God, projected that into her visions, and blindly passed it on to her followers, in her books and writings. This combination of fear and perfectionism would tie her views of health reform to her views of holiness, education, and institutionalism.

Never Good Enough (Education and Perfectionism)

Even when I grew up in Adventism in the 1950s and 1960s, there was a lot of emphasis on holiness and perfectionism. This came more from my Adventist schoolteachers and Sabbath schoolteachers than it did from my parents. We already noted how the doctrine of the investigative judgment insisted on perfectionism, and the nineteenth-century holiness movement also played an important role in influencing many of Ellen White’s demanding statements about healthful living and moral behavior. A common EGW quote that my peers and I grew up with as kids was “When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.”⁷⁰ Living without sin, perfectly reproducing Christ’s character, and being perfect have all been themes in Adventism since the mid-nineteenth century, thanks to Ellen White.

But once she set her sight on the destiny of a spiritual dynasty, these themes had to be institutionalized. Ellen managed to marry the themes of perfectionism and education through the “vision” and work of Goodloe Harper Bell. At first, the Whites themselves tried to start a school system in

Battle Creek. The cofounders of Adventism were all uneducated, but they recognized the need to educate their young, once their seven-year theory failed, yet, they believed non-Adventist education to be untrustworthy. However, the Whites' efforts in Battle Creek to establish a school, after four attempts, failed miserably for lack of support. James and Ellen blamed this failure on "a spirit of pride, criticism and worldliness" in the church. Once again, Ellen's "visions" take care of a major problem. They reveal that "no school could be effectively promoted until the Battle Creek Church was put in order."⁷¹

And her criticisms of how it needed to be put in order were very specific, based on a "vision" supposedly given to her on October 2, 1868. In this heavenly visitation, her confidence in humanity was "terribly shaken," exposing the "sordid" lives of "God's professed people." After receiving it, she became "sick and disgusted with the rotten-heartedness" of the Battle Creek Church. In it, she claimed, she was shown respected brethren leaving the "most solemn, impressive discourses on the judgment" and going to their rooms to indulge "in their favorite, bewitching sin, polluting their own bodies." And it wasn't just the adults who were guilty of moral depravity. In this same vision, Adventist children were presented to her "as corrupt as hell itself." If you want to hold power over people, just convince them that God is giving you "visions" of their secret sins.

Holding nothing back, Ellen proclaimed to the Battle Creek Church in March of 1869, "Right here in this church, corruption is teeming on every hand." Worldly practices had become so universal among God's people that she privately estimated that "there is not one girl out of one hundred who is pure minded, and there is not one boy out of one hundred whose morals are untainted." In fact, things had gotten so bad that Mrs. White had begun to refuse prayer requests for healing "for fear she might be asking the Lord's blessing upon a self-abuser." And it wasn't just sexual sin that was destroying the church, she also condemned them for "novel reading, theater attendance, dancing, wearing cosmetics and jewelry, listening to opera and jazz, and playing chess, checkers and backgammon." These "amusements open the door for great evil," the prophet declared, and "heaven condemns them."⁷²

It never seemed to occur to Ellen White that "there are none who are righteous, no not one" (Romans 3:10), for she had embraced the heresy of

perfectionism and projected its condemnations on to God. A pattern that we will see throughout Ellen's lifetime, once the church becomes a denomination and she pursues a dynasty of leadership, is that she will use people to build the Adventist kingdom until they become a threat to her, and then she will brutally discard and condemn them, based on "visions" from God. This is what happened with Goodloe Harper Bell and Sydney Brownsberger, two professional educators who built the SDA educational work, after the Whites failed. And this is what happened to SDA physicians William Sadler, John Harvey Kellogg, and Charles Stewart, who all played a key role in establishing Adventist institutional medical work, but were all eventually condemned by the prophet, disillusioned by her false and inconsistent testimonies, and ultimately were rejected by Ellen White and left Adventism.

G. H. Bell, an Oberlin College educator, came to Adventism through the Western Health Reform Institute, where he was indoctrinated in the Adventist health reform philosophy. This fit well with his Oberlin perfectionism, and allowed him to incorporate Ellen White's demanding moral standards into the early SDA educational curriculum. Sidney Brownsberger helped to establish SDA higher education. He was more educated than Bell, graduating from Michigan University and serving on their academic senate. He helped to establish Battle Creek College and served as the first president of Pacific Union College. But as Bell and Brownsberger increasingly rose to prominence in SDA education, Ellen White would accuse Bell of making "grammar his idol," and accused Brownsberger of taking the SDA college to "a position that God does not approve."⁷³ To disagree with the prophet was to become the target of a vision.

Sadler, Kellogg, and Stewart were all gifted physicians who not only did a great deal to establish the SDA medical work, but also made a major impact beyond Adventism. Again, the more influential they became, the more of a threat Ellen White perceived them to be. Ultimately, she severely rebuked and condemned all of them in many cases that the doctors believed were proven to be untrue. All three men wrote letters or books confronting the prophet and her inconsistencies. But the oracle of God could not be wrong, and all three doctors were driven from the Adventist Church.

From Charismania to Charisphobia

I will close this chapter with one final irony. The more Ellen White emphasized holiness and the need for moral sinlessness and perfection, the less she relied on her charismatic background or referred to the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. To promote holiness through obedience to the Old Covenant Law, rather than through the perfect finished work of Christ and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, is in direct conflict with the New Testament. It is, in fact, the heresy of legalism and perfectionism. Adventists and their leadership were clearly guilty of these heresies in the 1860s and 1870s. During this same period, Ellen moved from being a radical charismatic who claimed that God showed her it was sinful and demonstrated a lack of faith to go to an earthly physician, to one who became critical and condemning of charismatic Christianity, while she continued to say she was receiving “visions” from God.

Both from her own writings, as well as secular documents from the time,⁷⁴ it is obvious that Ellen Harmon-White was a radical visionary (there were many such people at this time in American religious history), who functioned in a subculture of extreme enthusiasm (the shouting Methodists). Even after she left the shouting Methodists, she became involved with Elder Israel Dammon and others who were actually arrested for their extreme and fanatical charismatic activity, which included shouting, screaming, disturbing neighbors, radical faith healing (rejecting physicians), extended trances, visions, being slain in the spirit, speaking in tongues, supernatural manifestations, crawling, barking (and making other animal noises), falling and lying on the floor in meetings, prophecy, and other ecstatic experiences.

However, in the 1860s and 1870s, most of these experiences and manifestations disappeared from Adventism, with the exception of Ellen’s opportunistic visions, which were now no longer accompanied by ecstatic experiences or manifestations. And Ellen’s testimonies about charismatic experience in general, and charismatic churches in particular, would now become highly critical and condemning. In fact, she would, henceforth, generally equate Pentecostalism and charismatic churches with spiritualism and satanic activity.⁷⁵ Her move from charismania to charisphobia was reflective of both Adventism’s general lack of experience with charismatic

spirituality and reinforcing of the fears of charismatic religion that remain in Adventism to this day.

Psychologically, I believe this radical shift in Ellen White's theology can be explained by the following factors. (1) Ellen White's two other cofounders, James White and Joseph Bates, came out of the Christian Connection movement, which was known for its fundamentalist (left brain) theology that was generally uncomfortable with charismatic Christianity. Ellen generally supported their positions and views to maintain her own status, and paradoxically gave her husband and Bates divine authority through her visions. (2) After being disfellowshipped from the shouting Methodist movement and marginalized for her involvement with Elder Israel Dammon by some Adventists, she recognized her need to distance herself from extreme enthusiasm. (3) Finally, Ellen's extreme positions based on visions, such as avoiding earthy physicians, the shut door, close of probation, and the failure of the seven-year theory, all caused Ellen White to be exposed and embarrassed in a manner that required a dishonest cover-up by her and her cofounders, and a need to make her prophetic status more low profile, until the controversy blew over. After this, her ecstatic "visions" would decrease and disappear, as she would copy from other authors, often base her testimonies on hearsay, and then attribute these "visions" to God. This is what the historical and psychological evidence clearly demonstrates, in my professional opinion, and it was all ultimately necessary for Ellen White to fulfill her dreams of dynasty.

Questions

1. If Ellen White got her health reform “visions” directly from God, why did they contain so much that has been completely discredited?
2. What were the most bizarre and ridiculous teachings that Ellen claimed to receive from God concerning sex and vital force physiology? What do they imply about her own sexual identity?
3. What role did Ellen White’s perfectionism play in her establishment of Adventist education? How easy would it be to establish a healthy self-identity under such a system?
4. Why would a woman who claimed to be a visionary and who thrived as a charismatic in the shouting Methodist movement come to fear and condemn all charismatic religion?



Ellen White, circa 1864

Courtesy of Ellen G. White Estate

CHAPTER 8

“Holy” Plagiarism—Charisfraudia

Do not borrow the productions of other men’s brains and pens, and recite them as a lesson; but make the most of the talents, the brain power that God has given you.

—Ellen White, *Review and Herald*

President Trump got a big laugh recently while speaking at the Al Smith Dinner, when he lamented that the press has been even more biased during his administration than any other. To prove this, he said, “Michelle Obama gave her speech as First Lady, and the media absolutely loved and praised it.” They called it one of the greatest speeches ever given. “My wife, Melania, gave the exact same speech,” and the press was relentless in their criticism, condemnation, and repudiation. Talk about a double standard!

There are a lot of jokes about plagiarism, but when you attribute your borrowed ideas and words to God, deny that they were copied, and have a whole denomination of people believe they come from heaven, that is no joking matter. Especially when they generate a religion of fear, and turn a plagiarist into a great religious icon. I first became acquainted with how extensive Ellen White’s borrowing or plagiarism was while I was a seminary student at Andrews University in Michigan, and heard about the discovery of the minutes of the 1919 Bible Conference, which had been purposely buried and then lost in the archives of the General Conference for more than fifty years. These minutes revealed that many of the main leaders of the SDA Church in 1919, including the General Conference president himself, were largely aware of the problems surrounding Ellen’s plagiarism, but were afraid of the fundamentalists in the church who would cause a major rift or full division in Adventism if what they were talking about became public. I determined at that time that I wanted to do a master’s degree in history and make the 1919 minutes the focus of my thesis.

When I completed this thesis in 1982, I knew a lot more about Ellen White and her copying than I ever wanted to know. But since that time, I completed a doctoral dissertation at Claremont on Ellen White entitled “The Irony of Adventism.” Ronald Numbers published his excellent book *Prophetess of Health*, Walter Rea wrote his bombastic critique of Ellen’s plagiarism called *The White Lie*, and Fred Veltmann completed his multiyear independent study of Mrs. White’s “borrowing” in the book *Desire of Ages*. All of which served, along with much other research, to reinforce the unavoidable conclusion that Ellen White’s copying was so extensive and comprehensive that it was responsible for nearly all the content in her books on history, health, the Bible, and theology. Teaching in an Adventist university was like walking on eggshells after that. But this book is attempting to try to understand the psychological dynamics that were behind Ellen’s borrowing and the way she related to it.

We have already established in the previous chapters that for a number of reasons, Ellen often found herself desperate to use deception and dishonesty in order to survive in her role as prophet within Adventism. This was true with regard to her first main vision, which established the shut-door theory and its many variations, the seven-year theory, her reversal on church organization, her denial of dependence on health reformers, her reversal on personal testimonies, and contradictions relating to her “visions” in general.⁷⁶

The Addictive Nature of Dishonesty

It is a psychological truth that as long as people can survive, benefit, and even thrive on the basis of dishonesty, they will consciously choose to use it more, not less. And that many notable religious plagiarists such as Joseph Smith, Jemima Wilkinson, and Ellen White may have had a *subconscious* desire to actually be exposed, based on their deep repressed feelings of guilt.⁷⁷ Even though Ellen White had a number of close calls where her dishonesty was threatened to be openly exposed in the 1840s and 1850s, she managed not only to survive but also thrive into the 1860s and beyond where her plagiaristic patterns became increasingly productive and prolific. When confronted by others who noticed the similarities between her words and writings and the works of others, Ellen vigorously denied any

dependence on human sources and insisted that her words, spoken and written, were dependent on the revelations and “visions” from God alone.

The earliest examples of this occurred after June 5, 1863, when Ellen claimed to have her great health reform vision. This revelation would become the basis of her extensive writings and talks on the importance of health reform, which included vegetarianism, water treatments, phrenology, and the condemnation of tobacco, alcohol, cheese, bonnets, hats, masturbation, marital sex more than once a month, and a host of other activities also condemned by the nineteenth-century vital force health reformers. Five, in particular, seemed to have the greatest influence over the young prophetess, although she would deny being familiar with any of their works before receiving her health reform vision. These reformers were Horace Mann, Dio Lewis, Larkin B. Coles, Russell T. Trall, and James Caleb Jackson. As we have noted previously, Ellen generally received the themes that she would have “visions” about primarily from her husband, James, and Joseph Bates. So, it is not coincidental that both Bates and James developed a strong interest in the mid-nineteenth-century health reformers before Ellen did.

There is clear evidence that Ellen had access to the works of these reformers through her husband before her health reform vision. And yet, when she was specifically confronted about claiming their ideas as her own, she was very explicit and specific in her denials, insisting that she had not read them and would not read them until her own views were fully written out, “lest it should be said that I had received my light upon the subject of health from physicians, and not from the Lord.”⁷⁸ But this was not sufficient for many critics, who felt the evidence for her plagiarism was overwhelming. So, Ellen issued a detailed explanation to refute such detractors in the *Review and Herald*.

I did not know that such works existed until September, 1863, when in Boston, Mass., my husband saw them advertised in a periodical called the Voice of the Prophets, published by Eld. J. V. Himes. My husband ordered the works from Dansville, and received them at Topsham, Maine. His business gave him no time to pursue them, and as I determined not to read them until I had written out my views, the books remained in their wrappers.

My views were written independent of books and the opinions of others.⁷⁹

The problem with these statements is that they are in direct contradiction with the facts. As historian Ronald Numbers has documented, Ellen completely ignored her admitted reading of “Jackson’s article on diphtheria nearly six months before her vision” on health reform in 1863. She and her husband were both well aware of the teaching and writing of various popular health reformers well before the date of her acclaimed June 5 vision. And James actually published six major articles in the *Review and Herald* by such reformers, between July and December of 1863, long before Ellen wrote out her health reform “vision” fifteen months after the event.⁸⁰ Some of these articles included direct quotes of the health reformers, by James, from the very materials that Ellen claimed had “remained in their wrappers” until long after they had already been published in the *Review*. When you tell the truth, you don’t need a great memory, but when you make a practice of lying, you better remember better than Ellen did.

There is such an established pattern both before Ellen’s health reform “vision” and after it that she took other people’s words, attributed them to God, and then claimed that they were given to her through visions, that anyone who is aware of the evidence has to engage in the most extreme denial to believe that she did not know what she was doing, or that she was not guilty of major deception and fraud. Many Adventist apologists have done somersaults trying to escape this conclusion, and we will show why their rationalizations are implausible and impossible. How did Ellen get away with it? This was an unprecedented period in American religious history for new offshoots, cults, and sectarian movements, especially ones that were led by women who claimed to hear from God or to be God.

Obviously, women were very much repressed during this period in American history, so some would argue that this was the only way that they could fight this oppression. Ironically, Ellen reached the pinnacle of authority in Adventism while she denied ordination to women in the SDA Church (the topic of my dissertation at Claremont). She was not a liberator of women in general, only a deceptive self-promoter. But churches were experiencing schism, division, and fragmentation like never before during this period. It was a time that birthed crazy religious enthusiasm and

visionaries in overabundance. Ellen took advantage of all of this, as she stepped into her destiny.

As a pastor who spent a good deal of my ministry studying these issues and hoping and praying that I could come to some other conclusion, before I became a psychologist, I take no pleasure in writing this book. But it is unfortunately not uncommon to see this pattern of deception with many of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century prophets who established major religious movements. We see it with Ann Lee, founder of the Shakers, who claimed to be the female incarnation of Christ; with Joseph Smith and the Mormons; Charles Taze Russell and the Jehovah's Witnesses; Jemima Wilkenson and the Society of Universal Friends, a sectarian offshoot of the Quakers; Mary Baker Eddy and the Christian Science movement, who extensively plagiarized Phineas P. Quimby; and in the twentieth century, we also see a similar pattern of deception with L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of the Church of Scientology, who was convicted of fraud and who once boasted, "If you want to make a lot of money, start your own religion." Adventists have traditionally argued that there was no monetary motivation for the Whites, but we will see that even by the Whites' own testimony, this, too, was not true.

True Believers and Demonized Doubters

In each of these cases where religious icons rose up through deception, the true believers⁸¹ who followed the founders developed an amazing blindness to their founder's sins. Those with the honesty and integrity to question or expose these sins were immediately ostracized and condemned as outcasts or turncoats, and typically consigned to hell. There were plenty of such individuals who were contemporaries of Ellen White, and who were all eventually demonized for speaking the truth. We already noted in chapter 6 how ministers Case and Russell, and their entire Messenger Party, were expelled from Adventism in the 1850s for daring to question the integrity of Ellen White and the authenticity of her visions. In the 1860s, many within and outside of Adventism recognized that what Ellen White claimed to see in her health reform "vision" was virtually identical to what a number of health reformers had already written. One such Adventist was a self-styled physician named Horatio S. Lay, who pumped Ellen White for

what she had seen in her June 5, 1863, “vision” and, when Ellen hesitantly began to share its contents, told her that many “eminent physicians” were currently teaching exactly what she had been shown.⁸²

But Brother Lay seemed naive enough to believe that God independently revealed to Ellen White the very materials that were available to her from the eminent physicians to which he referred. Later, a large number of genuine and much more prominent Adventist physicians would see Ellen’s copying for what it was, leave the SDA Church, and reject her professed “visions” as fraudulent and deceptive, the three most notable being Charles E. Stewart, William S. Sadler, and the most famous of all, John Harvey Kellogg. We will look at their rift with Ellen White more closely in chapter 13. But for the purposes of this chapter, these doctors, along with many other SDA physicians, numerous ordained ministers, and even one of Ellen’s bookmakers, gradually began to question the integrity of Ellen along with the authenticity of her visions.

In many cases, these doubts were based on years and even decades of observation and experience. And in the case of Kellogg, he knew the Whites as family. For many years in his teens, he worked as an apprentice under James White and spent a great deal of time in their home. Ellen was like a second mother to him. But Kellogg and his colleagues became very powerful in the Adventist Church and famous outside the church, which definitely provoked the jealousy of the General Conference leaders and Ellen White herself. When the rumors questioning the validity of her “visions” and testimonies became more than she could bear, Ellen claimed to have another “vision” in the night season, in which God showed her the faces of her critics and accusers, including Dr. Kellogg, Dr. Sadler, and many others. She then testified that she was “directed by the Lord to request them, and any others who have perplexities and grievous things in their minds regarding the testimonies that I have borne, to specify what their objections and criticisms are.”⁸³

Holy Hypocrisy

Kellogg refused to respond because he didn’t think it would do any good, but Dr. Sadler and Dr. Stewart, Kellogg’s associate, jumped at the opportunity. Many of their questions had to do with testimonies connected

to the building of the Battle Creek Sanitarium, where they knew firsthand that Ellen had lied, engaged in false character assassination against Kellogg, and behaved unethically, all in the name of “visions” from God. We will address these accusations later, but for now, I want to focus on their criticisms concerning Ellen’s plagiarism and her flagrant disregard for her own testimonies in cases where she intentionally violated them. Her writings, which were attributed to her health reform vision, contained a great deal of condemnation, warning against the use of dairy products such as butter, milk, and cheese, with even stronger condemnations for the use of eggs, meat, and especially unclean foods such as oysters, pork, and ham.

Stewart and Sadler had eaten at the table of Ellen White many times, and Kellogg was particularly familiar with what she ate and served at her table from 1868 to 1894, all years when her health reform testimonies were published and very firmly established in the church. Stewart pointed out that during these years, Ellen had made it clear that her testimonies were not suggestions, but dictates from God through visions, and quoted her words that “God gave the light on health reform and that those who rejected it, rejected God.”⁸⁴ This is just one of many places where the prophetess equated her testimonies with God’s truth, as we have already seen.

So, Stewart wanted to know how it was that Ellen rejected and ignored the very light on health reform that she imposed on others, attributed to “visions” from God, and declared were mandatory testimonies, which if one failed to obey would result in “rejecting God.” He then went on to expose her hypocrisy with regard to her liberal use of milk, butter, eggs, and various forms of both clean and unclean meats which she had condemned at her very own home. He questioned the validity of the “visions” based on the fact that during the very time she was writing her testimonies of prohibition to others, this was the very same “period between 1868 and 1894 in which you ate meat and oysters and served meat on your table” to others. Was he to assume, he wondered, based on her actions that were directly “contrary to the light God had given [her]” that these testimonies were not from the Lord at all.⁸⁵

And it wasn’t just Ellen’s hypocrisy that riled Stewart, Sadler, and Kellogg. These men were intimately acquainted with the health reform literature of the day and were very aware that Ellen was guilty not only of flagrant plagiarism, but also of attributing these plagiarized words to

“visions” from God. Again, with Stewart as their spokesman, he addresses Ellen’s plagiarism from Larkin B. Coles, a Millerite who wrote *Philosophy of Health*, and makes it clear that he is well aware of her extensive plagiarism in religious and historical books, as well as her books on health. So, it is not just the recent research of men like Ronald Numbers, Walter Rea, and Fred Veltman that have exposed the extensive plagiarism of Ellen White. Her own contemporaries and colleagues in Adventism were aware of it as well. Adventist apologists who have argued that plagiarism wasn’t illegal in Ellen’s day but a common practice are discredited by the fact that Conybeare and Howson (major publishers in the nineteenth century) threatened to sue Ellen’s Adventist publisher for copyright infringement, based on her extensive plagiarism of their book *Life and Epistles of the Apostle Paul* (1855) in her book *Sketches from the Life of Paul* (1883).⁸⁶ The denomination immediately ceased publishing and selling Ellen’s book in response to this lawsuit, and didn’t publish it again until the copyright expired.

Not all Adventists who were aware of the obvious similarities that existed between Ellen White’s writings and the works of others were disturbed by it, including some of Dr. Kellogg’s physician colleagues. Dr. Daniel Kress explained away the parallels between Coles’s *Philosophy of Health* and Ellen’s writings by commenting to Kellogg, “Isn’t it wonderful that the Lord should put this into two minds at different times.”⁸⁷ This convenient explanation for Ellen’s plagiarism was not unique to Adventism. When the prophetess Jemima Wilkinson was caught copying one of her books nearly word for word from a Quaker preacher named Isaac Penington, one of her prominent disciples responded, “Could not the Spirit dictate to her the Same Word as it did to Isaac?”⁸⁸

Adventists who have used this same rationalization and justification for Ellen White have one major problem. The health reform ideas Ellen copied from Larkin B. Coles, Horace Mann, Dio Lewis, Russell T. Trall, James Caleb Jackson, and others, regarding vital force disease and death, the heating of the brain, wearing hats, phrenology, masturbation, sex in marriage, etc., have all been fully discredited and shown to be nonsense. Yet, Ellen insisted that she got these ideas directly from God, and not from any of these authors that she had obviously been exposed to, even though she denied being influenced by them. This goes beyond innocent denial or a

belief that all truth comes from God and can therefore be attributed only to God. Any fair-minded person who is exposed to the evidence⁸⁹ is forced to conclude that Ellen was guilty of illegal acts, immoral acts, lying, deception, and fraud, along with some serious psychological pathology.

Who Says Cheaters Don't Prosper?


Like her contemporaries, Joseph Smith and Charles Taze Russell, who built multimillion-member religious movements on a foundation of dishonesty and fraud, Ellen, too, had to be overwhelmed with how successful her methods turned out to be. Success is a factor that typically leads religious people to assume that the ends justify the means. "God is blessing me. Therefore, what I am doing must be okay." When this kind of thinking leads to the extremes of an actual God delusion (believing or teaching that what you say or write is directly from God) with disciples blindly following, you have the classic making of a religious cult. Ellen not only created a cult through her visions, but also reigned over this cult for 71 years as its prophet until her death in 1915, and continues to be its source of authority in the 105 years after her death. And unlike Smith and other cult leaders, she largely escaped the stigma of being a cult leader, because she was able to get away with the vast majority of her plagiarism, lying, deception, and fraud.

It is difficult not to conclude, based on the historical facts, that Ellen came to suffer from delusions of [grandeur](#), megalomania, or grandiosity. "Grandiose delusions (GD), [delusions of grandeur](#), expansive delusions are a subtype of delusion [that occur in patients](#) suffering from a wide range of psychiatric diseases, including two-thirds of patients in manic state of bipolar disorder."⁹⁰ Again, it is not my purpose to try to label Ellen White with a postmortem diagnosis, but rather to point out that from a psychological perspective, her [behavior and](#) thinking appears to have been clearly pathological. "GDs are characterized by fantastical beliefs [that one is famous, omnipotent, wealthy, or otherwise](#) very powerful. The delusions are generally fantastic and typically have a religious, science fictional, or supernatural theme."⁹¹

The myth of Ellen White was that she was this poor badly disabled girl who only had a fifth-grade education, struggled with health issues her

whole life, and could never have written the books she wrote or built the church she cofounded except by the supernatural and miraculous intervention of God. And yet, virtually every accomplishment attributed to her can be naturally explained through her methods of plagiarism, lying, deceiving, fraud, cover-ups, and heaping condemnation and guilt trips upon her detractors. The fact that she was not only able to survive these tactics without losing most of her supporters, but also able to thrive in ways that her contemporary prophets were not as successful at doing is really the most amazing thing about Ellen White. She proved that at least in this world, cheaters can truly prosper.

To what degree she deliberately deceived as opposed to being blinded by delusional thinking may be up for debate. But there is no question that she engaged in a good amount of both deliberate deception and delusional thinking. What separated her from the many other delusional religious deceivers of her era, which we have mentioned in this chapter, is that she managed to escape exposure on a large scale. And the many mini exposures that she did encounter were more effectively crushed by her and her apologists in her lifetime and immediately thereafter than what we see in most of her counterparts.

Grandiose Delusions	
	
People suffering from grandiose delusions wrongly hold themselves at an extraordinarily high status in their mind.	

Adventists will surely protest the notion that Ellen White was grandiose in any way, insisting that she was a very humble person. They also insist

that she was extremely moral in the face of her repeated hypocrisy and immorality. Ironically, the EGW quote that I was required to memorize in school, more than any other, was the following.

The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall. Education p. 57.

In the January 1871 issue of the Adventist magazine *Review and Herald*, the essence of this quote was attributed to Anonymous. Ellen copied it and claimed it as her own, given to her by God, just another case of literary theft. So, one can only conclude, objectively, from the evidence that hers was a false humility, designed to cover a lifetime pattern of dishonesty, fraud, God delusion and “holy” plagiarism.

Questions

1. Why was Ellen White's dishonesty and plagiarism so addictive in nature? What would have happened had she given it up?
2. Why did Ellen and her true believers demonize those who disagreed with them about the prophet's highly ambitious claims concerning her inspiration?
3. If Ellen truly believed her testimonies were straight from God, why did she so flagrantly violate them in her own personal behavior?
4. How remarkable is it that Ellen managed to pull off her deception and plagiarism with much greater success than the other major religious con artists of her day?



James and Ellen White
Photo courtesy of Ellen G. White Estate

CHAPTER 9

From Marriage to Matriarch

The Lord hates all deception, secrecy, and guile.

—Ellen White

The story is told of a minister who was called to a local nursing home to perform a wedding. An anxious old man met him at the door, clearly nervous about his decision to get married at his age. The pastor sat down to counsel the old man and asked several questions. “Do you love her?” The old man replied, “I guess so. I don’t know her that well.” “Is she a good Christian woman?” “I don’t know for sure, but I think so,” the old man answered. “Does she have lots of money?” asked the pastor. “I doubt it. We’re both pretty poor.” “Then why are you marrying her?” the preacher asked. The old man replied, “She can drive at night.”

Some marriages seem to be born out of practical necessity more than out of love. And while this tends to be more common among senior citizens than young people, the marriage of James White and teenager Ellen Harmon certainly seemed to fit with this pattern. James and Ellen were joined in holy matrimony on August 30, 1846, in a wedding that would have seemed very unlikely only a year before. It was not a romantic union. The couple was being accused of immorality for traveling together unchaperoned. So, James gave Ellen an ultimatum that they must marry, or he would have to leave her on her own. Their marriage took place nearly two years after the Great Disappointment, when both James and Ellen had wrongly expected the world to end and were devastated by their misunderstanding of prophecy. But as we have already noted, they both continued to believe that Christ was soon to return and that probation had closed for all who had rejected the Millerite message.

Forbidding Marriage and Getting Married

They were both so convinced that Christ's return was imminent that as they traveled unmarried, trying to encourage those who had endured the disappointment to remain faithful, they both took the position that time was too short for anyone to consider getting married. James documented this view in a letter to Enoch Jacobs, published in the *Day Star Extra*. The letter was published in October of 1845, and accused an Adventist couple who chose to wed out of faithlessness for ignoring their advice. He claimed to speak for Ellen and the whole little group of believers when he rebuked this couple, writing that they had "denied their faith, in being published for marriage. We all look on it as a wile of the devil. The firm brethren in Maine who are waiting for Christ to come have no fellowship with such a move."⁹²

Years later, reflecting back on his early experience with Ellen, James would reconfirm that all the believers in their little flock (including Ellen) held strongly to this position against marriage because "such a step seemed to contemplate years of life in this world."⁹³ It was also a position that would cause their detractors to later accuse them of "forbidding marriage and commanding to abstain from meats" (1 Timothy 4:3). At this time, Joseph Bates had not yet formulated his seven-year theory, which would predict that the Second Coming would occur on October 22, 1851, a theory which the Whites would accept as we have shown, and Ellen would confirm through vision. So, at this point, in the mid-1840s, Ellen was still having visions, telling her that Jesus was right on the verge of returning to earth. Lucinda Burdick, who was a friend of Ellen both before and after she married James, traveled with her at times and was familiar with her writings and presentations to the churches in 1845 and 1846. But she increasingly became disillusioned with Ellen's professed "visions" as she repeatedly saw that her prophecies didn't come true. Burdick described her experience in the following words.

I became acquainted with James White and Ellen Harmon (now Mrs. White) early in 1845... She pretended God showed her things which did not come to pass. At one time she saw that the Lord would come the second time in June 1845. The prophecy was discussed in all the churches, and in a little "shut-door paper" published in Portland, Me. During the summer, after

June passed, I heard a friend ask her how she accounted for the vision. She replied that “they told her in the language of Canaan, and she did not understand the language; that it was the next September that the Lord was coming, and the second growth of grass instead of the first in June.”⁹⁴

But September would also pass with no Second Coming, so two more false prophecies were added to the list. Some would suggest that Ellen was just an immature teenager at this time, so it is not surprising that she would misunderstand things. But Miles Grant, who also knew Ellen well in the 1840s, and would later write a book exposing her failures, including the concerns of Lucinda Burdick, showed that even in her youth Ellen was quick to condemn those who questioned her revelations. Picking up where Burdick left off, Grant wrote:

September passed, and many more have passed since, and we have not seen the Lord yet. It soon became evident to all candid persons, that many things must have been “told her in the language of Canaan,” or some other which she did not understand, as there were repeated failures. I could mention many which I knew of myself. Once, when on their way to the eastern part of Maine, she saw that they would have great trouble with the wicked, be put in prison, etc. This they told in the churches as they passed through. When they came back, they said they had a glorious time. Friends asked if they had seen any trouble with the wicked, or prisons? They replied, “None at all.” People in all the churches soon began to get their eyes open, and came out decidedly against her visions; and, just as soon as they did so, she used to see them “with spots on their garments,” as she expressed it. I was personally acquainted with several ministers, whom she saw landed in the kingdom with “Oh! such brilliant crowns, FULL of stars.” As soon as they took a stand against the visions, she saw them “doomed, damned, and lost for ever, without hope.”⁹⁵

The Ultimate Con

Even before she married James, Ellen seemed very aware of the power that her “visions” held over believers, but the problem came when believers weren’t convinced or began to doubt the visions. After James and Ellen were married, they continued to travel to the churches promoting the visions, but they were destitute, living in poverty, and had to deal with an increasing number of believers who questioned or doubted Ellen’s visions. What they desperately needed was a wealthy, mature, highly respected leader in the movement who would take their side and embrace the visions. Such a man was Joseph Bates, a wealthy retired ship captain, who embraced the Millerite message and became a committed health reformer and showed an interest in early Adventism, but, unfortunately, from the Whites’ perspective, was not fully convinced about the legitimacy of Ellen’s visions.

This is where we see the really sad and ugly side of young Ellen’s character. It is one thing to be swept up in an emotional tide, where disappointed and desperate adults surround you, as a seventeen-year-old girl, and come to the conclusion that you are a prophet or visionary who gets direct messages from God. But it is something else, altogether, to weave a premeditated plan that intentionally plots, deceives, manipulates, defrauds, and grossly misrepresents God to others, in order to gain financial and political clout. This is precisely what the historical evidence shows was done by Ellen White to Joseph Bates, when she was just a nineteen-year-old young woman. The Whites had been trying to convince Bates that Ellen was the prophetic chosen one by God. But the wise old sea captain was not willing to jump on their bandwagon. He had remained uncommitted about the “visions” even though he was sympathetic to their cause.

This changed in a small house meeting of Adventist Millerites, which occurred in Topsham, Maine, in November 1846. The Whites knew that Bates would be present, and they also knew, as everyone who knew Bates did, that astronomy was the favorite subject of the aging former ship captain. So, for the only time in her entire life, Ellen just happened to receive a detailed “vision” about astronomy and the heavens that evening. Other observers in the room noted that Bates was fascinated as the young Ellen walked in trance “making motions as if she was flying through space.” Then she began to reveal what “God was showing her.” Early Adventist pioneer and church historian J. N. Loughborough put it this way.

One evening...at the house of Mr. Curtiss and in the presence of Elder Bates, who was yet undecided in regard to these manifestations, Mrs. White, while in vision, began to talk about the stars, giving a glowing description of rosy-tinted belts which she saw across the surface of some planet, and added, "I see four moons." "Oh," said Elder Bates, "she is viewing Jupiter!" Then having made motions as though traveling through space, she began giving a description of belts and rings in their ever-varying beauty, and said, "I see seven moons." Elder Bates exclaimed, "She is describing Saturn." Next she said, "I see six moons," and at once began a description of the "opening heavens," with its glory, calling it an "opening into a region more enlightened."⁹⁶

Another very sincere believer who actually witnessed this "vision" named Mrs. Truesdail would later describe it in these words.

Sister White was in very feeble health, and while prayers were offered in her behalf, the Spirit of God rested upon us. We soon noticed that she was insensible to earthly things. This was her first view of the planetary world. After counting a loud the moons of Jupiter, and soon after those of Saturn, she gave a beautiful description of the rings of the latter. She then said, "The inhabitants are a tall, majestic people, so unlike the inhabitants of earth. Sin has never entered here."⁹⁷

I can still clearly remember being taught in Adventist schools as a kid that this proved Ellen was a true prophet. She was shown detailed truths about astronomy, when she only had a fifth-grade education, and had never read or been taught such things.

Again, this is a repeated pattern for Ellen White. Over and over, she denies reading materials that clearly appear to be the true sources of her visions, only to have it later proven that these were indeed the sources she was fraudulently claiming to have received from God. This is either pathological lying, or a very extreme case of delusional and/or dissociative behavior.

After her “vision” was over, Joseph Bates questioned her about what she was shown, and she explicitly denied having ever read or been taught anything about the subject, even though Bates had written a tract, *The Opening Heavens*, that Ellen had obviously read. But her denials convinced Bates, as she had planned, and she had added “inhabitants” who were “tall, majestic people” to convince Bates, knowing that he would never be able to disprove her bizarre claim. How does this fit with Ellen’s quote, “The Lord hates all deception, secrecy, and guile?” Again, observers in the room recognized that Bates was totally convinced by the vision.

It was evident from Brother Bates’ smiling face that his past doubts in regard to the source of her “visions” were fast leaving him. We all knew that Captain Bates was a great lover of astronomy, as he would often locate many of the heavenly bodies for our instruction. When Sister White replied to his questions, after the vision, saying that she had never studied or otherwise received knowledge in this direction, he was filled with joy and happiness. He praised God, and expressed his belief that this “vision” concerning the planets was given that he might never again doubt.⁹⁸

Ellen was so certain that the Lord’s coming was at hand, that it never could have occurred to her that time would last for at least another 174 years, and that the science of astronomy would expose the fact that God was not the source of her scheming scam, which paraded as a vision. With our modern telescopes and actual spacecraft explorations of Jupiter and Saturn, there has been a steady increase in the discovery of moons around these planets, and an absolute determination that there are no inhabitants on these planets. By the latest count, Jupiter has 79 moons, and Saturn has 62.⁹⁹ Ellen quoted the scientific knowledge that was available in her day, thanks to Galileo, concerning the moons, but she sadly misjudged how this would betray her in the future. However, once Bates was on board, James and Ellen had the support that they so desperately needed, and were quick to document the results of this meeting in their church publication, *A Word to the Little Flock*, printed in 1847.

At our conference in Topsham, Maine, last Nov., Ellen had a “vision” of the handy works of God. She 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.¹⁰⁰

Antisocial Behavior

Had it truly been a “vision” from God, Ellen could have enlightened Bates that both Jupiter and Saturn had many more moons than was currently believed, but instead she used the “tall inhabitants” as her new revelation, which would prove to be ridiculously false, after those in the meeting were all dead. But somehow, Adventists, even today, manage to put blinders on where their religious icon is concerned, even when she was guilty of antisocial behavior. You don’t need to be a licensed psychologist or to saddle Ellen with a diagnosis to see that her behavior here was clearly antisocial. A definition of antisocial behavior includes covert deceitfulness and disregard for others, and goes hand in hand with habitual sociopathic lying, used to continually benefit one’s status or position. This is a pattern that unfortunately fits with Ellen’s behavior over a lifetime.

Walter Rea rightly raises the question in his book *The White Lie*, “Why did Ellen change most, if not all, of the copied author’s speculations and suppositions into absolutes, so that the copy work made it appear that she was always on the scene of action in some ‘visionary’ form, when obviously she wasn’t?” The answer is self-evident. She did so to deliberately deceive both friend and foe into believing that she was God’s special instrument, His special messenger, and unique last-day prophet, not unlike the ridiculous claims made by Joseph Smith and his Mormon followers. Rea reveals that many discouraged him from using the title he chose for his book because it was too harsh. But it would be fair to argue that his title was far too benevolent. A white lie is defined as “a harmless or trivial lie.” This was hardly the case with Ellen’s deceptions, which in many cases destroyed lives, and always grossly misrepresented God.

Again and again, we see that she accesses some form of information from others, conjures this into a vision, and then totally denies having any knowledge of the information before God gave her the vision. Early on, she does this to elevate her prophetic credibility, but as she becomes more established in her authority, she is ever more vicious in her attacks on her perceived enemies, or those who threaten her in some way, and demonstrates a willingness to destroy them in the name of God. In the chapters ahead, we will see many more examples of this, but for now, let's return to her marriage with James, and the unprecedented power she would achieve in Adventism after the deaths of Bates and her husband.

A Very Rocky Marriage

To say that the Whites had a rocky marriage would be an extreme understatement. But at least they would no longer have to live in poverty, once their relationship with Bates was cemented and they increasingly began to benefit financially from the publication of Ellen's "visions" and revelations. Ellen's apologists like to insist that neither of the Whites were concerned with money, or benefitting financially from leading the Advent movement. But once again, the historical evidence clearly indicates otherwise. They were definitely penniless when they began, but once they had the full support of Bates, they would rise in stature and fortune, until they amassed enormous assets that would dwarf anyone else in the movement. In terms of today's dollars, the Whites would become millionaires many times over,¹⁰¹ with the income from her books alone exceeding \$3,000,000 in today's money.

Early on, both James and Ellen each received salaries that were larger than most ministers were paid, and Ellen was paid for every article she wrote in church papers, while most other writers "contributed their articles gratuitously." But once the Whites began to publish Ellen's books, their income would skyrocket. In the decade between 1856 and 1866, Ellen earned \$11,435 in royalties alone, which was the equivalent of \$316,894 in 2019 dollars. But this was nothing compared to what she would make in the following decades. Her book royalties would grow to \$8,000 a year, and ultimately to over \$12,000 a year (at least \$300,000 a year in today's money). Over her lifetime, she received book royalties that were the

equivalent of at least \$3,000,000 today.¹⁰² James and Ellen also sold a hymnal to believers that also made them more than a million dollars in today's money. And James, who was known to be shrewd with money, wrote Ellen a letter while they were apart (as they often were) encouraging her to keep churning out the profitable books.

Our financial matters stand well, and there is wealth yet in our pens. With the increased demand for our writings...there will be an income of several thousand dollars annually, besides the immense amount of good our writings will do.¹⁰³

Of course, James's writings could not compete with Ellen's, because he actually wrote the words that appeared under his name, rather than plagiarizing them, and he did not have the advantage of getting people to believe that his words came directly from God. James enjoyed the financial benefits, but often bristled at the blind authority that was granted to Ellen by many believers, especially when she tried to exercise it against him. Had it not been for the tangible material wealth their union produced, it is very likely their marriage wouldn't have lasted at all. So, never let it be said that they weren't materialistic. Even with their salaries and royalties, the Whites both still managed to peddle pictures, trinkets, paper souvenirs, and charts as they traveled to the churches. The more Ellen became a prophet celebrity in the movement, the more she took advantage of this status financially. In the early 1860s, when her health reform message was being promoted, Ellen made her rounds to the churches and sold paper dress patterns to members for a dollar a piece (over twenty-five dollars apiece in 2019 money).¹⁰⁴

This pattern of taking advantage of church members for their own financial gain started as early as 1849, when Ellen was getting "visions" that the Lord's coming was finally at hand. Conveniently, she also got a number of "visions" telling members to sell their properties and even to give up all their possessions so that the Whites could use such funds for "the cause." The historical evidence shows that to a great degree, the cause ended up being, after their seven-year theory failed, the Whites' own personal enrichment.¹⁰⁵

I saw it was the will of God that the saints should cut loose from every encumbrance, dispose of their houses and lands before the time of trouble comes, and make a covenant with God by sacrifice. I saw they should sell if they laid their property on the altar and earnestly inquired for duty.¹⁰⁶

Many sincere followers of the Whites, who believed that Ellen's professed "visions" were from God, tried to comply with the prophet's admonitions and warnings about the end of the world, only to fall on severe financial hardship when their possessions were gone, and the Lord failed to return again. Some who were aware how the Whites were using the money, or misusing it, lashed out in anger and refused to support what they perceived to be the Whites' scam any longer.

I must and will be free of the responsibility of publishing and sending out Ellen's visions to open the hearts of the Br'n to give, and then have that means used so that it would be better to use her own words 'Sunk in the bottom of the Ocean.'¹⁰⁷

After the seven-year theory expired in October 22, 1851, and the Lord failed to come once again, in spite of Ellen's predictions based on visions, the prophetess became a little less bold in her demands about giving. She had been attacked by criticisms like the one above, and remained fairly quiet for a few years, as she tried to recover from the 1851 disappointment, and her husband's refusal to publish any more of her "visions" in the church paper after 1851. But by the mid-1850s, her husband was replaced by Uriah Smith as the *Review and Herald* editor, and Smith (who at that time was a big believer in Ellen's prophetic gift) began to publish her "visions" again. This change seemed to embolden Ellen, and she now encouraged believers to downsize their homes, instead of getting rid of them altogether, and to give their profits to the movement. As always, this counsel was supposedly given under the specific direction of divine visions.

I saw that at present God did not call for the houses his people need to live in, unless expensive houses are exchanged for cheaper ones... But if those who have of their abundance do not hear his voice, and cut loose from the world, and dispose of

a portion of their property and lands, and sacrifice for God, he will pass them by, and call for those who are willing to do anything for Jesus, even to sell their homes to meet the wants of the cause.¹⁰⁸

Wealth by Visions of Damnation

It is no coincidence that the Whites began to accumulate significant wealth as Ellen became increasingly aggressive in her fundraising, which threatened those with eternal damnation who did not give generously to the cause. As always, these threats were directly attributed to “visions” from God and amazingly continued to be tied to the notion that Christ’s coming was so near, there was no time to accumulate wealth. Ellen even directed her visionary threats, personally, to couples or individuals that she targeted because they had considerable wealth.

Dear Brother, I saw that the Lord wanted your means which he has lent you. He calls for you to use it to advance His cause... I saw that you should work as fast as possible to remove the means which God has lent you from the hands of unbelievers and transfer it to the believers... I saw that the scenes of this earth’s history are fast closing. It will soon all be finished, and what is to be done must be done quickly.¹⁰⁹

At the very time Ellen warned others to give up their means with urgency, because time was short, she and James accumulated personal wealth on a level they had never known before. With regard to specific date setting, which had already proven Ellen’s “visions” to be wrong several times, the prophetess had almost learned her lesson, but not quite. For in 1856, she claimed to receive the following message, concerning those who attended a conference, that would come back to haunt her many years later.

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.”¹¹⁰

Such “visions” served to maintain a real sense of urgency in the movement, but would become quite embarrassing in the early 1900s when every person referred to in the “vision” was dead, and the prophecy was proven to be false. Yet, by this time, Ellen was so entrenched as the powerful matriarch of the church that most Adventists would blindly follow her, no matter what errors or false prophecies were exposed. This position of matriarchy did not come easily, especially when her husband was still alive. James knew better than anyone else that his wife’s “visions” were not what they were thought to be by the faithful. That was why he quit publishing her “visions” in the church paper in 1851. But he was in a double bind. If he discredited the visions, his source of money, power, and influence in the movement would largely disappear. But if he didn’t, he was participating in the fraud, and having to live with a wife who was increasingly being treated as a god herself by many naive believers.

This double bind was a source of great aggravation to James, and the source of many arguments, tensions, and even lengthy separations that characterized the Whites’ marriage. Here he was, a church founder and leader, and the supposed spiritual head of the house, having to live with a prophet who could never admit she was wrong. James and Ellen did exchange some loving letters when their travels and work kept them apart, and they did share the heady experience of founding a successful movement and reaping great benefits from it, so their marriage was not without joys. But they both had very strong personalities and pathologies. James was a total workaholic who did not care well for his health, despite the Whites’ health message.

After the first of his five strokes, in 1865, “problems that had been evident in his early years became ‘pronounced.’ His moodiness, depression, paranoia, suspicion and control all became increasing issues in a marriage where he had to cope with a prophet wife who was ‘always right.’”¹¹¹ The difficulties between James and Ellen were compounded by their continuing fights over how to raise their children. Their oldest surviving son, Edson, was especially considered to be a problem child. James felt that a hard-line “tough love” approach was the best way to deal with this situation, while Ellen chose the opposite direction and, in James’s opinion, “badly spoiled the boy.” Their conflicts were so pronounced that extended separation often brought the only relief they could find.

During the decade of the 1870s, James and Ellen spent a good deal of their time on opposite coasts, in an age when travel was not easy. During this period, Ellen turned to a friend named Lucinda Hall, and wrote her a number of letters expressing great frustration about her marriage. She wrote, “I do not think my husband really desires my society, he charges a good deal of his unhappiness upon me.”¹¹² She based this conclusion on her husband’s resistance to her counsel, and his rejection of her testimonies as lecturing and mere opinion, as he expressed in the following letter.

I shall use the good old head God gave me until He reveals that I am wrong. Your head won’t fit my shoulders. Keep it where it belongs, and I will try to honor God in using my own. I shall be glad to hear from you, but don’t waste your precious time and strength lecturing me on matters of mere opinion.¹¹³

At this time in her ministry, Ellen wasn’t used to having her counsel referred to as lecturing or mere human opinion. So, it wasn’t terribly surprising that she started sharing her criticisms of James with others. A sampling of her very revealing letters to Lucinda make it obvious that Ellen had more than her share of marital frustrations. She wrote, “I can but dread the liability of James’ changeable moods, his strong censures, his viewing me in the light he does.” Furthermore, she insisted that because of James, “a great share of my life’s usefulness has been lost... I cannot have confidence in James’ judgment in reference to my duty. He seems to dictate to me as though I was a child.” Ellen even went so far as to question her husband’s sanity.

I think he would be satisfied if he had the entire control of me, soul and body, but this he cannot have. I sometimes think he is not really a sane man, but I don’t know. May God teach and lead and guide. His last letter has fully decided me to remain this side of the mountains.

It is obvious that the Whites’ separations were not just work related as the Adventist denomination has tried to maintain. And it is one thing to verbally question a spouse’s sanity in a fit of anger or emotional rage, and something altogether different, especially for a person in her position to

question the sanity of her husband in writing. Ellen was not one to allow any person to have power over her, so it is not surprising that after revealing her plans to keep her distance from her “not too sane” husband, she wrote Lucinda Hall again, a short time later, apologized for her indiscretions, and begged her to “burn all my letters.”¹¹⁴ She never denied the content of her letters, but did come to recognize what a liability they could be in the wrong hands. She also wrote James, confessing her indiscretions to him, and seeking his forgiveness.¹¹⁵

Never again would Ellen confide in writing about her marriage, but her friend Lucinda kept the evidence, in spite of Ellen’s plea to destroy it. When James died, after his fifth stroke, on August 6, 1881, at the age of sixty, Ellen was now free to fulfill the potential that she accused her husband of squelching when he was alive. But now that her “not so sane” husband was out of the way, she would write, “Although he is dead, I feel that he is the best man that ever trod shoe leather.”¹¹⁶ To what can we attribute this about-face? James came to the point where he didn’t want to be around Ellen, and Ellen came to the same place where she wanted to keep her distance from her pathological husband. But in his death, he becomes the best man who ever lived.

Murray Bowen, the famous family systems psychiatrist and theorist, developed what is called the differentiation scale in marriage and family therapy.¹¹⁷ He demonstrated that with rare exceptions, people tend to marry others who are on the same end of the differentiation scale that they are on. A person who is highly differentiated, or emotionally healthy, is typically one who has passed through the different developmental stages of life in a healthy manner, first differentiating from mother, etc. Such a healthy person will usually marry someone who is also emotionally healthy. On the other hand, people who are emotionally or psychologically unhealthy will also tend to marry unhealthy or undifferentiated mates. The drunkard, gambling addict, or abuser will invariably marry a codependent who enables the pathological behavior.

The Whites both mutually benefitted from their pathological behaviors by obtaining great wealth, power, and influence in the movement they were able to help found with Joseph Bates once they deceived him and won his support. Their individual pathologies, strong wills, lack of education, dishonesty, and insecurities made it very difficult for them to get along well

in marriage, but it was always of preeminent importance to put forward a good front that would allow them to continue to succeed. This is why Ellen wanted her “too honest” letters destroyed, and why she canonized her husband after his death, leaving her as the only living founder and unrivaled wealthy power broker of the movement. Shortly after her husband’s death, she sold their beautiful “16-room, three-story brick Italiante mansion...a mile and a half from the center of Battle Creek” the Whites had recently purchased. The matriarch kept her headquarters on the West Coast at the sprawling Elmshaven in the Napa Valley, but had her nose in the middle of all church matters.¹¹⁸

But even after her husband’s death, Ellen did not have a good taste in her mouth about marriage. In fact, she reverted back to her 1845 position that time was too short for people to consider getting married. In 1885, she released the following testimony, “In this age of the world, as the scenes of earth’s history are soon to close and we are about to enter upon the time of trouble such as never was, the fewer the marriages contracted, the better for all, both men and women.”¹¹⁹ Not only did the prophetess see that marriage was now to be avoided, but also for those who were married, that the time for having children was now (1885) long past.

The time is and has been for years, that the bringing of children into the world is more an occasion of grief than joy... Satan controls these children, and the Lord has but little to do with them. The time has come when, in one sense, that they that have wives be as though they had none.¹²⁰

Thankfully, the world did not take her God-given counsel, or none of us would be here today. And her testimonies were not just general in nature. They were also aimed at specific people or couples who dared to defy her prophetic pronouncements. For example, Ellen spoke against the marriage of Brother C even though there seemed to be no moral grounds for her disapproval of their union. After they ignored her opposition and got married anyway, the prophetess continued to criticize their decision by writing the following testimony.

How much better would have been the influence of both if they had not married... Brother C could have done a very good

work for the Master, had he devoted himself to this work as the Lord's servant. When married, his work has not been more than one-half what it might have been.¹²¹

God evidently showed her the future with regard to what would have been had the couple not engaged in matrimony. And God also showed the prophetess that there was no place for interracial marriage in His kingdom. For Ellen condemned the union of blacks and whites as well. "There should be no intermarriage between the white and the colored race."¹²² Her defenders will argue that this was the common thinking of Christians when she wrote the testimony, but that does not account for her attributing such a position to God. When we see the historical evidence, we find that nearly every position Ellen took fit with some form of the common thinking of her day. The problem came with her claiming that she was shown these views by God. It gave her great power and wealth at the time, but as with every deception, it would ultimately be exposed.

Just for good measure, Ellen also spoke against marriages between believers and unbelievers (which was interpreted as forbidding Adventists to marry non-Adventists), marriage at an early age (her own experience), and marital unions where there was a significant age gap. As time passed and her 1885 statements against marriage became outdated, Ellen would deny giving testimonies forbidding marriage after the turn of the century.¹²³ Some of these statements were not made available to church members who remembered them, so once again Ellen and her White Estate became guilty of lying and cover-up.

Never has a woman managed to build such a saintly and godly reputation, and gigantic following, while engaging in such elaborate fraud, deception, harm to those who attempted to expose her, and self-delusion. The historical, psychological, and moral evidence that Ellen was not a healthy person, but was one of the most successful con artists to ever lead a movement is overwhelming. But there is more to come.

Questions

1. What was worse, James and Ellen White forbidding marriage for their fellow believers, or violating this, by getting married themselves?
2. Why was Ellen's astronomy "con" pulled on Joseph Bates, so evil in nature? Do you agree that this was anti-social behavior?
3. How would you rate the marriage of James and Ellen on a scale of 1–10, with 10 being "most healthy"? What do you make of Ellen questioning James's sanity in writing?
4. What do you make of Ellen threatening believers with damnation who didn't sell their possessions and give them to the church (controlled by Ellen and James)? Do you agree with the author, that the White marriage would have never lasted, had they not made so much money from their mutually beneficial church positions?



William Gage

Courtesy of Free Pictures SDA Pioneers

CHAPTER 10

Prophetic Schizophrenia

The Holy Ghost is the Author of the Scriptures and of the Spirit of Prophecy.

—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*

The story is told of a psychiatrist who was seeing a client for the first time, and wanted to make sure that she understood that his fee was three hundred dollars an hour. The woman assured him she understood, and that she was willing to pay his fee in the hope that he could cure her of feeling like such a failure. The doctor listened carefully to her history, and then used his best therapeutic interventions to persuade her that she was not a failure, but at the end of their first session, he asked her how she felt, and she said, “Like a complete failure!” “I’ll see you next week,” the therapist said, “and maybe we can do better.” The same thing happened many more weeks in a row, until in total frustration, the doctor finally blurted out at the end of her tenth session, “I can assure you, ma’am, that anyone who can afford my fee is not a failure!”

The truth is that Ellen could have paid such an exorbitant fee with the wealth she accumulated from her prophetic position, but it never occurred to her that she needed a therapist. When you are surrounded by people who think you are the voice of God and grant you a godlike status, it is very difficult to have an accurate self-perception. And those who did point out the prophet’s failures, errors, and contradictions were quickly ostracized and condemned. It was an age unlike our own, where documents could not be digitally preserved or researched. Therefore, plagiarisms, dishonest changes, and cover-ups were much easier to manage and harder to discover.

Today, there are various websites which document that Ellen’s writings not only contradict the Bible in many places, but also directly contradict themselves.¹²⁴ The examples of her self-contradictions are much more numerous than what can be found in these websites, and I have included many of them in the previous chapters. But it is not surprising that the

voluminous writings of Ellen White, which were largely taken from other authors without giving credit and dealt with a ridiculously wide range of subject matter, would contain abundant contradictions. Ellen became a poser who pretended to hear from God on virtually every subject, and over the years, she couldn't remember what she herself had written or copied on many topics, hence, her denial that she ever forbade marriage and a hundred other similar examples.

Ellen the Addict

Ellen was not an integrative thinker. In his outstanding psychological classic, *The Open and Closed Mind*,¹²⁵ Milton Rokeach distinguishes between integrative and nonintegrative thinkers. An integrative thinker is one who prizes consistency of belief, and will not convert to a new position until it can be made to fit into his holistic worldview. By contrast, the nonintegrative thinker is quick to embrace new ideas, and will hold to a number of inconsistent or contradictory views at the same time. Ellen not only contradicted herself repeatedly in her writings, but also engaged in what can only be described as open hypocrisy. For example, Ellen came to strongly condemn meat eating, and especially the consumption of unclean meats while she freely ate such meats herself after giving these testimonies. She strongly condemned the wearing of jewelry, while she owned and was pictured wearing expensive jewelry. Most surprising was her addiction to alcohol, when she so vehemently condemned its use and was known to be an active temperance reformer who tirelessly promoted prohibition.¹²⁶

It seems that this addiction came on gradually as Ellen used alcohol for medicinal purposes and made home-brewed wines, as well as using alcohol to make vinegar wine which she eventually became heavily addicted to drinking. She described this addiction herself in the following statement.

I had indulged the desire for vinegar. But I resolved with the help of God to overcome this appetite. I fought the temptation, determined not to be mastered by this habit. For weeks I was very sick: but I kept saying over and over, The Lord knows all about it. If I die, I die; but I will not yield to this desire. The struggle continued, and I was sorely afflicted for many weeks.

All thought that it was impossible for me to live. You may be sure we sought the Lord very earnestly. The most fervent prayers were offered for my recovery. I continued to resist the desire for vinegar, and at last I conquered. Now I have no inclination to taste anything of the kind. This experience has been of great value to me in many ways. I obtained a complete victory.¹²⁷

Vinegar by itself is not addicting, but homemade vinegar and vinegar cider, which became the source of Ellen's addiction, were made with whiskey and hard cider in the nineteenth century and, even after the pressing process was complete, contained at least 3 percent alcohol, which could be much higher depending on fermentation. It should also be noted that Ellen had condemned the use of vinegar for others as part of the health message that she had borrowed from Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and other reformers.

The salads are prepared with oil and vinegar, fermentation takes place in the stomach, and the food does not digest, but decays or putrefies. As a consequence, the blood is not nourished, but becomes filled with impurities, and liver and kidney difficulty appear. Heart disturbances, inflammation, and many evils are the result of such kind of treatment, and not only are the bodies affected, but the morals, the religious life, are affected.¹²⁸

It is also known that as early as the 1850s, Ellen's diary showed that she indulged in tomato wine, homemade grape wine, as well as domestic wine that was used primarily for medicinal purposes. Later, in 1859, she records putting up a pint of currant wine for a church member as well as a pint of grape wine for themselves. This pattern obviously stretched out over years, for in the 1880s, E. P. Daniels, an SDA elder, justified his family's use of wine based on what he knew to be the example of Ellen White, and James before his death. Ellen responds to Daniel's claim in a letter by admitting the use of alcohol, but trying to minimize it. In 1892, she wrote that her vinegar wine was not strong enough to deal with her case of sleeplessness and lamented that she didn't have a "strong cordial" of alcohol in the house at the time.¹²⁹

But again, what is so disconcerting about her behavior is that it was in direct conflict with the testimonies she claimed God gave her, forbidding physicians to use “wine, beer, and other stimulants in the treatment of the sick.”¹³⁰ This gross hypocrisy is pathological, and as a psychologist who specializes in the treatment of addiction, I can say that Ellen’s own description of her vinegar wine addiction fits very closely with long-term alcohol abuse and alcohol withdrawal delirium.

God the Child Hater

But Ellen’s prophetic schizophrenia went to much deeper and basic theological issues than these more superficial problems. We have already established that James White and Joseph Bates came out of the Christian Connection movement, which had a heretical view of the nature of Christ, denying that He was God and man, had a harsh false view of God, and a resulting legalism and religion of salvation by works that were highly destructive. Ellen moved from the established Methodist Church, in her youth, to the shouting Methodists, who were wildly charismatic compared to conventional Methodists, but also legalistic in their orientation.¹³¹ Ellen had an external locus of control. Her views were quickly shaped and taken from others, and then attributed to God to give her status, power, and spiritual authority which she could not have experienced in any other way.

We have established that her very first “vision” in Adventism was taken from Joseph Turner, and then attributed to God. As her status grew in the Advent movement, she looked to her cofounders, Joseph Bates and her husband, James, for most of her ideas, and then endorsed their views by giving them prophetic status. As some of their views proved to be embarrassingly wrong, the shut door, close of probation, seven-year theory, etc., she began to branch out to other authors, both Adventist and non-Adventist, for the basis of her visions. But as long as Bates and James were alive, Ellen made sure that her “visions” did not contradict even their most unorthodox beliefs. And she openly shared many of their harsh and fear-based views of God.

The great theologian Karl Barth was once asked, “What is the most profound theological concept you have ever heard?” Without hesitation, he replied, “It was when my mom sat me on her knee and taught, ‘Jesus loves

me this I know.” Somehow, Ellen never got that memo. As a child, she was filled with fear about God, and overwhelmed with dread that she was lost and rejected by God. She didn’t even understand that God loves all His children with an unconditional love. So, she taught both her own kids and her children in the church that God hated them when they were bad.

To her own son, Willie, she wrote, “You must not get angry, but remember the Lord could not love you if you should be naughty” and “The Lord loves those little children who try to do right and He has promised that they shall be in His kingdom, but wicked, naughty children, God does not love.”¹³² To children in the church in general, she wrote, “God hates unruly children who manifest passion and evil tempers, etc. He can not save them in the time of trouble.”¹³³ One who was actually receiving “visions” from God would have a better understanding of His character than the prophetess reveals. In Ellen’s mind, based on her imagined visions, God is harsh, even to the point of snatching children away from their Adventist parents by death, to motivate them to become more dedicated to the movement. In 1857, she writes these tragic, blasphemous words.

When you really [believe] this message the effect upon you will be to separate from the world, live out your faith, sell that you have, give alms, and lay up for yourselves a treasure in the heavens. God has come very near unto you when you were at a great distance from Him. He took two idols from you that you might draw near unto Him and that God alone might be exalted and reign supreme in your heart, and that your eye might be single to His glory. These children were snatched away to save you and her... Have not those with you that love not God and that God hates.¹³⁴

Does God really kill people’s children to make them more religious, to motivate them to sell what they have and give it to church leaders at His prophet’s urging? Ellen defines those who are outside her commandment-keeping cult to be outside God’s love, and even hated by Him. Since “God hates” them, she instructs her followers, again based on a vision, to not even pray for their sick.

God has shown me those who keep God's commandments to have nothing to do in praying for the sick of those who are daily trampling them underfoot, unless it is in some special case where souls are convicted of the truth and are decided to move out upon it. The partition wall between commandment keepers and those who trample them underfoot should be kept up.¹³⁵

Does that sound like Jesus? Did He forbid His disciples to pray for those who were sick outside His little group, or did He do the exact opposite? Ellen was shown by God that His Advent people were never to enter any non-commandment-keeping church, or to associate with people who did not keep the Sabbath. Her condemnation of Sunday worshippers is very ironic and schizophrenic, when one considers that the books she plagiarized to write *The Desire of Ages* (on the life of Christ) and *Steps to Christ* were largely written by Sunday worshippers.¹³⁶

Ellen was also influenced by E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones in the late 1880s, as they attempted to bring the message of righteousness by faith to the Adventist Church. In writing her books about Christ, under the influence of these men, she tried to present a softer, gentler picture of God, which directly contradicted many of her previous testimonies. Ellen sided with these younger ministers against the General Conference leadership, and used her prophetic influence to oust those at the top of the church hierarchy.

The Case of William Gage

One of the major causes of schizophrenia is relational pathology and severe social dysfunction during the early stages of life. Ellen's pathological picture of God and overwhelming fear that she was lost made it almost impossible for her to present a healthy picture of God to others as she grew older. Even when she obtained prophetic status, she was very insecure and easily threatened. She wanted the approval of people, but she was also quick to use her prophetic messages to control or to condemn those who failed to obey her testimonies, or who threatened her position in some way. Her religious schizophrenia destroyed many people over the years, but by far the most notable example of this in the 1880s was William Gage, who

became the mayor of Battle Creek and the first Adventist to hold a prominent position in politics.

Gage was a very humble and committed Adventist minister in Battle Creek, Michigan, who had no political aspirations or inclinations. He was a student of Ellen's writings, and knew that the traditional Adventist position had been to abstain from political activity, including voting, based on the "visions" of the prophetess. In the 1840s, 1850s, and early 1860s, Joseph Bates and James White took strong positions that Adventists were not to be involved in politics in any way, including voting, for two reasons. One, time was too short to get involved in politics, and two, it wouldn't do any good because the world was too corrupt. Ellen fully supported these positions through her visions, concluding that "Seventh-day Adventists should separate themselves from politics."¹³⁷

Yet, during the 1870s, as their predictions and prophecies about the end of the world had proved to be totally false, Ellen herself gradually began to become more involved in political issues, without any acknowledgment or admission that her previous "visions" were not accurate. She became an active temperance reformer, would speak in both Adventist and non-Adventist churches on this subject, and, by the end of the decade, had completely changed her position on both voting and political activity with regard to prohibition and temperance. This, despite the fact that her previous positions had been attributed to God. Now God was showing her that Adventists were "to become the head and not the tail" in movements such as prohibition and temperance.

They were now not only to vote, but also even to "vote on Sabbath," if necessary. When pressed on this, given her previous testimonies that said just the opposite, she declared, "Yes, to a man, everywhere, and perhaps I shall shock some of you if I say, if necessary vote on the Sabbath day for prohibition if you cannot at any other time."¹³⁸ This prophetic schizophrenia was puzzling and confusing to many, but to those Adventist temperance enthusiasts in Battle Creek who were looking for a candidate to run for mayor, it was music to their ears. They saw Ellen's reversal as support for Gage's candidacy.

For years, these Battle Creek temperance supporters had been betrayed by both the Democrat and Republican parties. Their candidates would promise to enact temperance reform if they were voted into office but, after

receiving the support of the temperance party, would quickly turn their backs and ignore them. So, in 1882, the temperance party decided to run their own candidate, and when no one seemed willing to step forward, they began to apply tremendous pressure on William Gage to volunteer. Gage was well-liked and respected in the city, and had gradually become a very persuasive voice for the cause of temperance once Ellen counseled Adventists to become leaders in the movement.

But Gage may have seen enough reversals by the prophetess to make him uneasy about actually running for office, because he wanted no part of a political election. This is where the community began to exert great pressure on him to change his mind. The non-Adventists who wanted him to run laid a guilt trip on him, saying that he would be responsible for the triumph of debauchery if he didn't run. And the Adventists who wanted him to run assured him that Ellen had overtly reversed her position on politics and would not condemn him for running. Gage finally caved into the pressure and won by a surprising landslide. Initially, his victory was celebrated by the church and lauded in its official publication, the *Review and Herald*, by editor Uriah Smith.

Smith wrote an editorial informing all Adventists of Gage's win, but was also quick to inform them that his candidacy was an exception to the rule, and that Adventism's traditional position on holding political office had not changed. Smith asserted that it was Gage's "duty" to "save the temperance cause" and that only the "very best class of citizens supported him." He concluded, "We rejoice that the temperance cause has won."¹³⁹ What Smith and Gage didn't realize was that the mayor's newly granted office and political power would make him the focal point of extreme jealousy by most Adventist ministers and administrators, and especially Dr. Kellogg and Ellen White, the two most powerful SDA leaders in the movement.

Based on all available evidence, Gage seemed to do a fine job as mayor, and was well-liked by the vast majority of Adventist and non-Adventist constituents under his jurisdiction. But this only served to annoy influential Adventists, whose jealousy continued to increase as Gage became more prominent. Even from the beginning of his tenure, certain powerful Adventists began to voice their criticisms. In the same *Review* where Smith wrote his positive editorial, General Conference president G. I. Butler expressed strong reservations about Smith's optimism and total disgust with

the whole process surrounding Gage's election. He wrote, "It is not safe to dabble in the pool of politics," and vented his disdain regarding the election celebration in the following words.

A sad and mortifying spectacle to see those who are professing to be God's peculiar people, preparing for the coming of Jesus, swinging their hats and hurrahing for this or that candidate.¹⁴⁰

Maybe Butler was familiar with Ellen's warnings against joking, jesting, joy, and glee, or even parents smiling at cute or witty remarks from their kids.¹⁴¹ Hers was generally a very sober, serious world with much condemnation and fear, which probably had a lot to do with the amount of severe depression with which she struggled. And Adventists in general have experienced a tendency to be much more sober and serious than the general population as a result.¹⁴² But Butler was not alone in his disapproval of Gage and his election to political office. Some Adventists argued that it would be impossible for Gage to be an effective mayor and still properly keep the Sabbath. But this was not the opinion of Adventists or non-Adventists in Battle Creek.

According to the *Battle Creek Daily Chronicle* and the *Nightly Moon*, Gage did a great job of doing what he was elected to do, and a remarkable job of cleaning up the town by clamping down on "whiskey and liquor traffic."¹⁴³ Both papers referred to him as the right man for the task. And there seemed to be no complaints about Sabbath problems from either Adventists or the community. But there was one very notable exception to this in Battle Creek, and that was the well-known Dr. John Harvey Kellogg. This famous Adventist physician not only opposed Gage from the beginning, but also actively campaigned against him, despite Kellogg's pro-temperance beliefs. The *Nightly Moon* reported on this rift between Dr. Kellogg and his fellow brother and minister. They interviewed Kellogg and asked him why he opposed Gage. The doctor was at least honest enough to admit what other SDA leaders who opposed Gage would not admit. Kellogg confessed that he was just plain jealous of the mayor. He said, "I'm sorry I worked so hard against Gage. I am afraid his being elected will injure my popularity."¹⁴⁴

But by far the most hurtful and damning opposition to Gage came from none other than Ellen White, who had led out in the temperance movement herself and encouraged her fellow Adventists to “become the head and not the tail” of this movement. This is what Gage had tried to do, but now the very thing that he had feared began to unfold. The prophetess would make yet another U-turn and target Gage with a new set of visions. Ellen, too, was very jealous of Gage’s newfound authority, but, unlike Kellogg, was unwilling to acknowledge her envy. Instead, she chose her usual passive-aggressive route of criticizing and condemning on the basis of “visions” she attributed to God. From the very beginning of his tenure, the prophetess distanced herself from Gage, like the plague. Her motivation seemed to be twofold.

First, she was being confronted and questioned about her “visions” which condemned political activity in the past, and she was not wanting to deny the validity of those visions. Second, she was threatened and intimidated by Gage’s newfound authority and influence, which was not an issue when he was just a pastor. He was now on the board of Battle Creek College, and making decisions that Ellen herself could not make, which clearly rubbed her the wrong way. So, the prophetess began to target Gage with testimonies that involved scathing rebukes, but were nothing more than ad hominem attacks. The first major example of this vitriol occurred when Gage and Uriah Smith, who also served on the board, had to make a decision about temporarily closing Battle Creek College.

Eliminating All Competition

A series of events had led to chaos and confusion at the college, and the prophetess was wanting to direct the outcome from the West Coast. But her harsh and unfair interventions proved to be without mercy, grace, or even a recognition of basic biblical principles concerning conflict resolution. She was consistently threatened by any Adventist leader who exercised authority that differed from her opinion (visions). Alexander McLearn had become the newly chosen president of the college, and he had immediately taken positions and implemented policies that were not only disturbing, but also opposed by many. McLearn was a Baptist who was expected to convert to Adventism when he was appointed president, but never made the

transition. This, along with the changes he made, caused extreme controversy on the campus.

One major opponent of the new president was Goodloe Harper Bell, a great pioneer of Adventist education who held impressive academic credentials and happened to be the chair of the English department at Battle Creek College. He was so disturbed by the new president's policies that he left his position early in the school year, and as things continued to unravel in the months that followed, the board felt it necessary to temporarily close the college in an effort to bring calm out of chaos. McLearn then joined the Seventh-Day Baptist Church to add insult to injury. And Ellen White used the opportunity to blast Bell, whom she had attacked before, and then to turn her ire on both Smith and Gage, but particularly on Gage.

All three men found her testimonies against them to be sadly inaccurate, and Smith refused to read them publicly before the Battle Creek Church, as the prophetess exhorted, for he believed that this would be unbiblical and inappropriate. When Smith refused to do her will, the prophetess sent stronger rebukes and much more scathing letters that she ensured were read before the church to shame and humiliate Smith and especially Gage. She claimed she was "present in their meetings" in a dream and saw that Smith and Gage had "no spirit of confession," for they had "treated her warnings as though they were the voice of a human rather than the voice of the Divine." She described Smith and Gage as "self-inflated, self-deceived souls" who "are deceiving others."

She attacked Gage even more than Smith, claiming that the thirty-year Adventist leader and *Review* editor had been led and influenced by Gage, who was relatively new to church leadership. Her professed "visions" against Gage were read in a November 1882 special testimony before the entire Battle Creek Church and contained the most condemning language. These words would have been hard enough to read in private, much less heard in such a public forum. Ellen pontificated:

William Gage is wholly unfitted to engage in the work of God. He does not see or sense his true condition. He has not an experimental knowledge of heart holiness, of communion with God... Oh, how often he catches at Satan's bait, which is presented in various forms. He has not been balanced by the

Spirit of God. He has not guarded the first risings of desire to hold every emotion and passion in calm subjection to reason and conscience. He has not been careful to suppress all unsanctified imaginings, and bring into captivity every thought to obedience to Christ. William Gage will prove a snare to the people of God wherever he shall take an active part; for he will lead away from right principles to carelessness and indifference in religious things. He has ever been a curse to the church in Battle Creek, and ever will be unless he is a thoroughly converted man.

Ellen pretends to know Gage's deepest motives, and accuses him of things of which anyone would be guilty. He has not "suppressed all unsanctified imaginings," he has not taken "into captivity every thought to obedience to Christ," and he has failed to live up to "heart holiness" and "communion with God." This is clearly an exercise in projection, for Ellen was revealing a much harsher spirit and unwarranted ad hominem attack than anything negative that Gage had done. She continued:

Such men [as Gage] will do tenfold more harm than good; because their daily life contradicts their teachings. They are destitute of the spirit of truth, unsanctified, unholy. I warn the people of God not to take this man as their pattern... God despises the flippant, chaffy spirit of Brother William Gage, for he makes God's people to err, he removes the sacredness of divine things, and brings them on a level with common things.¹⁴⁵

There was virtually no content connected with the prophet's attacks on Brother Gage, except that he and Smith had been unwilling to equate all her words with having absolute divine authority, and that Smith was unwilling to read her initial rebuke publicly before the church. She, therefore, savagely reproached them both, but especially Gage, in publicly read testimonies that were highly inappropriate. First, Ellen was clearly wrong because she ignored the principles of Jesus in Matthew 18 that require taking our concerns about others to individuals before expressing them publicly. Prophets are not exempt from this principle, but are even more responsible to observe it, given the damage and weight that their criticisms will have on others.

Second, Ellen judged and besmirched the motives and character of Gage in a manner that was highly destructive and completely out of harmony with the principles of how New Testament prophecy, and post–New Testament prophecy, is intended to function (1 Corinthians 14:3). I have expanded on this criticism in other books, so I will not do so again here, but Adventists have generally tried to apply an Old Testament view of prophecy to Ellen White, in a manner that is sadly and totally unbiblical.¹⁴⁶ To think that God would give Ellen White dreams and “visions” that so humiliate and destroy good people (we have seen many examples and will see more) is completely out of harmony with how God works and who God is. Uriah Smith’s faith in Ellen’s inspiration was deeply shaken by this case, and others to follow, and his confidence in her “visions” was greatly diminished.

Gage was basically destroyed by the way Ellen mistreated him. He not only lost his job at the *Review and Herald*, but also he lost his ministerial credentials, his standing in Adventism, and was so devastated by White’s unwarranted attacks that he never ran for public office again. But the prophetess wasn’t done. She saw fit to attack the entire Battle Creek Church as well. In the same special testimony, she wrote, “You are not a converted people,” and “the true condition of the cause of God in Michigan is deplorable.” This attack was reported in the public press and became a huge source of embarrassment and humiliation to the church in Battle Creek, and it set the cause of political action and activism back in a manner that no Adventist would dare run for office again for a very long time. But this would not reduce the amount of politics within the church, as the following chapter will reveal.

In closing this chapter, I will simply say that Ellen’s early prophecies were filled with errors and false predictions, but once she survived this period and the church became officially organized, she became emboldened to weaponize her “visions” against her enemies and all who dared to disagree with her, or fail to give her the absolute loyalty she demanded. From the early 1860s to her death, there is a steady stream and consistent pattern of testimonies that condemned and, in many cases, destroyed people who fell into this category. I’ll close with just one more example. We don’t know much about poor Mr. Jarvis Munsel, except that his home and marriage didn’t measure up to what true Sabbath keepers should be. But he

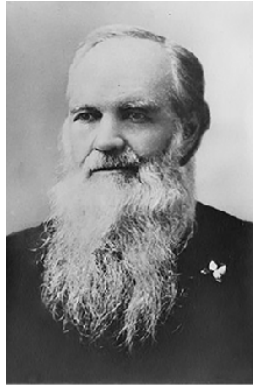
got on the wrong side of the prophetess, and once again, no real details are given of any wrong that he committed, yet that did not stop Ellen from issuing the following scalding testimony.

It becomes my duty to write you. I have been shown some things concerning you. In the last vision given me I was shown that you, Jarvis Munsel, have not a ray of light from Jesus. You are a complete agent for Satan to work through. You have ever been an injury to God's cause. You do not keep yourself straight but a few hours at a time. You have been puffed up by the enemy. You have been so large in your own estimation that God could impart to you no strength. You have lacked religion and have imitated the hateful disposition of Satan. You are one of his faithful servants. God disowns you. You are a curse to His cause... God will never take such as you to heaven.¹⁴⁷

My Bible says that we are to judge not when it comes to the eternal destiny of others. But Ellen seems to have no problem consigning people to Satan, hell, and eternal damnation. She seems to know who God hates, including children, and whom He has "disowned." The emotional vitriol she unleashes on those who happen to cross her or fail to submit to her self-proclaimed prophetic role underlines the lifelong insecurity that she never overcame and the fear of exposure that she knew would ruin her highly undeserved status. In our final four chapters, we will see this pattern continually emerge, particularly with regard to leaders in the church who somehow became a threat to Ellen and her pedestal existence. After Bates and James were gone, she was the matriarch, the top of the totem pole, and woe unto those who failed to acknowledge this pathological reality—which was really nothing more than prophetic schizophrenia.

Questions

1. Why did Ellen try to reframe her serious addiction, which she herself called life-threatening, as an addiction to vinegar? Was the “prophet” unaware that vinegar is not addicting?
2. Why would Ellen accuse God of hating children? Was this because she believed that God hated and rejected her as a young person? Is her theology blasphemous?
3. What do you think about the way that Ellen treated William Gage? Were her “visions” the cause of his destroyed life?
4. Why was Ellen so quick to condemn, when God does not condemn His children (Romans 8:1)?



J. H. Waggoner



E. J. Waggoner



T. Jones



Uriah Smith

Photos courtesy of Free Pictures of SDA Pioneers

CHAPTER 11

The Prophetic Trump Card

I have been shown that...when the judgment of the General Conference, which is the highest authority that God has upon the earth, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be maintained, but be surrendered.

—Ellen White (while her husband was GC president)

The story is told of a kid who had been expelled from school more than once for bullying other children, and his dad who liked to bully him (typical), warned his son that it better *not* happen again. So, when his boy was sent home a third time for bullying, the father exploded and screamed, “What happened?” His son said, “I didn’t bully any students. I just proved my teacher wrong. The teacher who hates me was looking right at me, and saying to the other students, ‘Bullies are cowards. They say mean things, but remember’—as she turned to write these words on the board—‘*words can never hurt you!*’ So I grabbed the dictionary off the shelf and threw it at the back of her head.”

There are many different kinds of bullies, but most people would never suspect that an eighty-pound sickly teenage girl (when she was eighteen) would become a religious bully, who would strike fear in those who threatened her or questioned her, through her prophetic trump card. We saw in the last chapter how William Gage had his life completely destroyed by Ellen White when he wasn’t even trying to oppose the prophet. And her destruction of Gage certainly ensured that Adventists would have nothing to do with outside politics. Ellen had good reason for wanting Adventists to stay away from outside politics, namely, that it would invite outside scrutiny, and Ellen knew that her prophetic trump card wouldn’t work against such outside scrutiny.

Therefore, she preferred her politics to function within the church, and she was very skillful in the political manipulation of SDA Church leadership, and Adventism as a whole. It is easy to manipulate when you

can pull out the voice or “vision” of God whenever you need it. And it is also easy to manipulate when you can divide and conquer the potential challengers that might threaten you and turn them against each other. In the 1880s and 1890s, three distinct groups of SDA leaders emerged, and Ellen would masterfully manipulate and control each of them to her own benefit. Bert Haloviak, church historian and General Conference archivist, has skillfully labeled these three groups as Pioneers, Pantheists, and Progressives.¹⁴⁸

Pioneers, Pantheists, and Progressives

Ellen White would ultimately oppose key leaders in all three of these groups when they threatened her power and authority. But ironically, the Pioneers who had the most conservative views of Ellen’s inspiration became the group that felt most betrayed by the prophetess. This group was generally made up of traditional leaders, who believed that Ellen’s “visions” came from God, and who dominated the General Conference in the 1880s. The most influential men in this pioneer category espoused the theology and doctrines that had been established largely by Joseph Bates and James White, and that had been confirmed by the repeated “visions” and testimonies of Ellen White. The top ten names in this group were the following:

Uriah Smith	George Irwin
G. I. Butler	J. N. Loughborough
Stephen Haskell	J. S. Washburn
O. A. Johnson	G. B. Starr
F. C. Gilbert	R. A. Underwood

Pantheists were very significant and influential leaders in Adventism who ended up leaving the church because they had a more liberal theology, and came to reject or repudiate Ellen White’s prophetic gift. Ellen would temporarily side with E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones in the 1880s, who would later become Pantheists, to oust the conservative General Conference leadership. They had become too powerful for her liking by the 1888

General Conference. But the Pantheists would expose Ellen’s contradictions and hypocrisy, and would therefore become the object of the prophet’s ire, opposition, and ultimate visionary condemnation. The main leaders in this group were the following:

J. H. Kellogg	A. F. Ballenger	A. T. Jones
E. J. Waggoner	J. W. Scoles	Harry Champness
A. R. Leask	S. S. David	L. H. Crisler
William Hutchinson		

Progressives were leaders who would displace the Pioneers, but who were much more liberal in their view of Ellen’s inspiration than their conservative predecessors. They would make up the leaders who were in power at the 1919 Bible Conference, after Ellen’s death, who were fully aware of Ellen’s plagiarism, but tried to hide this from the church at large. The minutes from this important meeting were buried in the GC archives, and were not rediscovered until Dr. Donald Yost accidentally uncovered them on December 6, 1974. This finding would leave the Progressives with a legacy they probably never anticipated. The top Progressive leaders in the church of Ellen White’s day were the following:

A. G. Daniells	W. W. Prescott	W. A. Spicer
C. L. Taylor	C. M. Sorenson	F. M. Wilcox
H. C. Lacey	G. B. Thompson	D. A. Parsons
B. L. House		

Conflicting Visions on GC Leadership

There is a strong tendency for Adventists to believe that because Ellen was a prophet, her motives were always pure, and that politics did not affect her counsels and testimonies. But nothing could be further from the truth. The prophetess was great at empowering General Conference leadership and equating their vote in session with the voice of God when they were supportive of her positions, but denouncing and condemning them when they threatened her power, authority, or opinion. In 1875, when her own

husband, James, was the General Conference president, and the Whites were greatly prospering from their positions in the church, Ellen claimed that God gave her the following statement about the General Conference leadership.

I have been shown that no man's judgment should ever be surrendered to the judgment of any one man. But when the judgment of the General Conference, which is the highest authority that God has upon the earth, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be maintained, but be surrendered. When the power which God has placed in the church is accredited to one man, and he is invested with the authority to be judgment for other minds, then the true Bible order is changed. Satan's efforts upon such a mind will be most subtle and sometimes overpowering, because through this mind he thinks he can affect many others... God never designed that His work should bear the stamp of one man's mind and one man's judgment.¹⁴⁹

One man must never be invested with such authority, but ironically Ellen has no problem claiming such authority for herself (one woman). In fact, she asserts that a departure from her testimonies would result in a departure from the scriptures. "If you lose confidence in the Testimonies you will drift from Bible truth." Why, because her writings represent the same train of truth as the Bible. "The Testimonies never contradict His Word." "There is one straight train of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written." This statement is delusional, given the abundant contradictions that exist in Ellen White's writings themselves, to say nothing of her many statements that have been proven to be totally false. Her writings about General Conference authority are just one of many examples that we have already explored. As long as James is General Conference president, this body is "God's highest authority on earth," but once her husband is no longer GC president, God shows Ellen that He has clearly changed His mind on this subject.

As for the voice of the General Conference, there is no voice from God through that body that is reliable.¹⁵⁰

The voice from Battle Creek, which has been regarded as authority in counseling how the work should be done, is no longer the voice of God.¹⁵¹

It has been some time since I have considered the General Conference as the voice of God.¹⁵²

Yet we hear that the voice of the Conference is the voice of God. Every time I have heard this, I have thought that it was almost blasphemy. The voice of the Conference ought to be the voice of God, but it is not, because some in connection with it are not men of faith and prayer; they are not men of elevated principle.¹⁵³

That these men should stand in a sacred place, to be as the voice of God to the people, as we once believed the General Conference to be—that is past.¹⁵⁴

When it supported her and served her purposes, the General Conference was the voice of God on earth. But when she was threatened by, or unhappy with, the direction this body was taking, she undermined and discredited it, projecting her displeasure on to God. Ellen projects her own views on to God so often, and in such obvious ways, that it would be humorous if it wasn't so sad. After she is well into her eighties, and firmly established in her matriarchal authority, the prophetess addresses the 1909 General Conference, and once again returns the mantle of God's voice to them, now that they are no longer a threat to her. Once again, she is all over the place in her pontifical dictates and prophetic schizophrenia.

I have often been instructed by the Lord that no man's judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any other one man. Never should the mind of one man or the minds of a few men be regarded as sufficient in wisdom and power to control the work, and to say what plans should be followed. But when, in a General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled from all parts of the field, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered. Never should a laborer regard as a virtue the persistent maintenance of his position of

independence, contrary to the decision of the general body. At times, when a small group of men entrusted with the general management of the work have, in the name of the General Conference, sought to carry out unwise plans and to restrict God's work, I have said that I could no longer regard the voice of the General Conference, represented by these few men, as the voice of God. But this is not saying that the decision of a General Conference composed of an assembly of duly appointed, representative men from all parts of the field, should not be respected. God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority. The error that some are in danger of committing, is in giving to the mind and judgment of one man, or of a small group of men, the full measure of authority and influence that God has vested in His church, in the judgment and voice of the General Conference assembled to plan for the prosperity and advancement of His work.¹⁵⁵

This would have been news to the two different General Conference administrations who were put out of office by the influence of Ellen White in 1888 and 1901. In both of these instances, the prophetess single-handedly removed GC presidents and their teams that she was opposed to or threatened by. And I want to briefly unpack each of these takedowns in more detail.

A Heritage of Gross Legalism

Up until the 1888 General Conference, Adventists were generally known to be gross legalists. James White and Joseph Bates had come from the Christian Connection movement which rejected the divine nature of Christ, denied the Trinity, taught that Christ's atonement on the cross was incomplete, and placed a premium on law keeping and perfectionism. In no case did Ellen White ever contradict these views in her writings or through her "visions" until the late 1880s when both her husband and Bates were long dead.

In many cases, she had strongly contributed to the legalistic spirit of Adventism when her fellow cofounders were alive. For example, we have already noted some of her many statements emphasizing perfectionism and living without sin. And she commonly appealed to her “visions” to insist that those who rejected distinctive doctrines such as the shut door, investigative judgment, seventh-day Sabbath, immutability of the Ten Commandment law, and even standards such as vegetarianism and dress reform were “turning their backs on eternity.”¹⁵⁶ All of these Testimonies were tied to the Adventist belief that the Old Covenant Law had not been done away with at the cross and that it was morally binding for believers in the New Testament and post–New Testament eras.

The Legacy of J. H. Waggoner

The one Adventist pioneer who had strongly challenged and rejected this position back in the early 1850s had been J. H. Waggoner, who taught that the whole Old Covenant Law had been done away with at the cross and that it was not binding on Christians in any way. His teaching that the perfect finished work of Christ was complete did away with the Adventist emphasis on the fourth commandment and the Old Covenant Law and was therefore extremely controversial. By this time, the Sabbath had risen to the top of the doctrinal tree in Adventism, confirmed by the “visions” of Ellen White. And the masthead of the *Review* which listed the leading doctrines of Adventism didn’t even mention righteousness by faith, justification, salvation by grace, or anything of the kind.¹⁵⁷ Adventists for decades taught that when one comes to God, He forgives their sins, but then helps the believer keep the law as a condition of eternal life.

J. H. Waggoner vigorously opposed this view and, despite the strong opposition of the other pioneers, wrote a book in 1854 entitled *The Law of God: An Examination of the Testimony of Both Testaments*. In it, he concluded that the law which Christians are “no longer under” (Galatians 3:24) and that Christ brought an “end” to (Romans 10:4) was the whole Old Covenant Law, including the Ten Commandments. And that we are now under grace and the “law of the spirit” for moral guidance, where there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1–2). This caused the leading brethren to explode in Battle Creek, and by 1856, they called a special meeting in the city to

examine Brother Waggoner's heresy. Waggoner left town and refused to attend, but the other leaders did gather and appointed Uriah Smith to take careful notes at the meeting.

Stephen Pierce was appointed to present the traditional Adventist position that only the ceremonial aspects of the Old Covenant Law were done away with at the cross. Waggoner's position was rejected and repudiated by unanimous vote. Ellen confirmed the decision of the committee through a "vision" that followed their vote, and wrote Waggoner to tell him that he was in error. Smith, who meticulously documented the whole process, would later refer to his notes in these words.

Sister White, shortly after this [the vote] had a vision in which this law question was shown her, and she immediately wrote J. H. Waggoner that his position on the law was wrong, and Brother Pierce was right.¹⁵⁸

As a follow-up to this result, James White had pulled Waggoner's book from publication and rebuffed his repeated requests to have it republished with the words "NOT until you revise your position on the law."¹⁵⁹ Waggoner refused to make such changes, and the book was never reissued. So, the whole controversy over the law and gospel was put to rest in Adventism until it reemerged in the 1880s. But what makes this controversy so interesting when it resurfaced was the reversal of Ellen White and the conflict she provoked with Smith and Butler, the GC president. What caused this issue to return to the forefront was the passionate writing of Waggoner's son, Elder E. J. Waggoner.

Waggoner became an associate editor on the staff of the *Signs of the Times Magazine*, under the direction of his father in the mid-1880s, and A. T. Jones would soon join him in a parallel position. These two men would become passionate advocates of the doctrine of righteousness by faith, and Waggoner would reiterate the same position on the law that his father had emphasized and Adventist leadership had repudiated. He wrote a series of ten articles in the *Signs*, resurrecting the position of his father and drawing the careful scrutiny of Smith and Butler. They expressed strong opposition to the young Waggoner, knowing that Ellen White had rejected his position

based on a previous vision. But they were frustrated because they were not in a position to fire the younger Waggoner or silence his pen.

To make things worse, when Waggoner finished his ten-article series in the *Signs of the Times*, he decided to run a new series of thirty-three articles in the same publication on the same subject. At this point, Uriah Smith was so disturbed that he wrote a series of rebuttals to Waggoner that he published as editorials in the *Review*, and President Butler, equally annoyed, wrote an eighty-five-page booklet in 1886, taking the opposite position from Waggoner.¹⁶⁰ He rehashed the 1850s debate and made it clear that this was a settled issue, and that church leadership had rejected Waggoner's view, including Ellen White. Initially, Butler and Smith got the support from the prophetess that they expected. Ellen wrote a strong testimony rebuking Waggoner and Jones, dated February 18, 1887.

And as usual, she generously sprinkled phrases such as "I was shown" and "God revealed" throughout the letter to make it clear that she was speaking for the Almighty, and not just giving her opinion. She wrote, "God has plainly revealed to me...that you have made a mistake," and that your "efforts have been deleterious." The prophetess censured them for their articles in the *Signs* and for Waggoner teaching such speculative doctrines at the college. One of her (God's) biggest concerns was that if leaders of the church showed any differences over doctrine, such "questionings" would raise "doubts whether we have the truth." Then unbelievably, she insisted that their subject matter of law and gospel wasn't critical or important. "These questions are not vital points."

Ellen warned that "everything like differences" must be repressed and that the gospel issue must be subordinated to more important pillar doctrines such as "the Sabbath" and "keeping the ten commandments of God." Harmony was to be maintained at all costs. "We must keep before the world a united front. Satan will triumph to see differences among Seventh-day Adventists." She closed her rebuke by informing Waggoner that she "was shown" that he was in need of much more "humility" and "meekness" and that leaders are to publish "things that reveal only harmony."¹⁶¹ Ellen sent a copy of her letter to both Uriah Smith and President Butler, who took it as a divine endorsement of their views, but little did they know what was coming.

Ellen Reverses Her Position on Law and Gospel in 1888

No sooner had Smith and Butler seen that the Waggoner-Jones view of salvation was again proven wrong by Ellen's visions, which they then hurried to communicate their victory to the church at large. Editor Smith immediately began publishing new articles and editorials in the *Review* discrediting Waggoner and Jones, and both men made renewed efforts to give Butler's book a much greater circulation. The prophetess was not pleased with this response, and wrote to each, Smith and Butler, informing them that their positions and principles were generally "right," but their attitudes against Waggoner and Jones were far "too sharp." She rebuked them for not applying the warnings she gave to Waggoner and Jones about the need for "unity" and "harmony" to themselves. And therefore, she concluded, that since they had failed to do this, she felt it only fair that all views be openly voiced at the coming General Conference in Minneapolis.

This opened the door for Waggoner and Jones to present their message that was growing in popularity to the General Conference assembly, and the rest is history. We don't have actual copies of their presentations, but Smith's summaries of them in the *Review*, clearly reveal that they dealt with the subject of law and gospel in Romans and Galatians. And many Adventists who had so long been oppressed with the burden of legalism responded to the new message of freedom with enthusiasm. The prophetess clearly took note of this, and to the absolute disbelief of Smith, Butler, and other pioneers in the movement, she now began to take a position that was 180 degrees opposite from her previous visions. Suddenly, she saw that the preaching of Waggoner and Jones was the "most urgent and important message" that Adventism had ever encountered. She referred to it as "the light" that was "to propel" the Advent believers into the "loud cry" and the "latter rain."

She was shown that if accepted, their message would now lead to the "speedy finishing of God's work on earth."¹⁶² President Butler was so humiliated and distressed by this about-face that he was forced to resign as president, with Ellen White's approval. He was temporarily replaced by Ellen's son Willie, until her first choice, Elder O. A. Olsen, was voted into the office. And in the months and immediate years following the 1888 GC, Ellen would continue to claim to receive the most superlative revelations

about the messages of Waggoner and Jones. God was now somehow obsessed with the message of “justification by faith” when He had never even mentioned it in any of her previous “visions” and revelations, which often emphasized legalism and perfectionism. Notice her convenient reversal as Waggoner and Jones’s message became popular in Adventism.

The enemy of Christ and man is not willing that this truth [justification by faith] should be clearly presented, for he knows that if the people receive it fully, his power will be broken. (*Review*, September 3, 1889)

There is not one in a hundred who understands for himself the Bible Truth on this subject of justification by faith that is so necessary to our present and eternal welfare. (*Review*, September 3, 1889)

The point which has been urged upon my mind for years is the imputed righteousness of Christ. (*Manuscript 36*, 1890)

Several have written to me inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the 3rd Angel’s Message, and I have answered, it is the 3rd Angel’s Message in verity. (*Review*, April 1, 1890)

This is the one interest that will prevail, the one subject that will swallow up every other—the righteousness of Christ. (*Review*, December 23, 1890)

If you would stand through the time of trouble you must know Christ and appropriate the gift of His righteousness which He imputes to the repentant sinner. (*Review*, November 22, 1892)

Before, God had shown her that the believer would have to stand “without sin” and without an “intercessor” during the time of trouble. Before the GC session, God had shown her that the topic of Waggoner and Jones was not “vital,” “critical,” or of “great importance,” but that it was peripheral, of secondary importance, and to be “suppressed” and “subordinated” to more important Adventist pillar doctrines. Now, God had reversed His position and shown her just the opposite. It is no wonder that Butler, Smith, and so many other old-timers in the movement who had

followed Ellen's quotes, testimonies, and "visions" so carefully were now confused and dumbfounded by the prophet's unexplainable U-turn.

What clearly happened was that Ellen White came to understand the true gospel for herself, for the first time, as a result of the preaching of Waggoner and Jones at the 1888 General Conference. She became excited about this, and proceeded to claim that God had now given her these truths in vision. So, she began to attribute the above quotes to God, which stand in stark contrast to her previous "visions" which stressed the need for "absolute obedience to God's law," perfectionism, and sinlessness, particularly during the time of trouble. "No sin can be tolerated in those who shall walk with Christ"¹⁶³ during this testing time.

She also saw a whole new subject matter to generate huge revenue for herself, as she would copy from non-Adventist authors writing new books about Christ and His gospel, and making very hefty royalties in the decade that followed the 1888 General Conference. Which leads us to the contrast between how Ellen handled her book royalties in comparison to other authors in the church.

Great Controversy over Book Royalties

Ellen White borrowed without attribution, or stole many of the themes that she published in her book *The Great Controversy* from Uriah Smith's exhaustively researched *Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation*.¹⁶⁴ Smith was a tireless student who followed the principle of delayed gratification in his research. Ellen, by contrast, chose the path of least resistance and immediate gratification by plagiarizing from others and then attributing what she copied to God. But this did not stop her from gaining huge financial benefits from these writings. The apologists for Ellen White have tried to argue that she was a self-sacrificing, self-denying woman, who lived very modestly and humbly, and who was never motivated by greed. But once again, the historical evidence sadly contradicts these claims.

In the mid-1880s, the Adventist publishing work was struggling to make a profit, partially because they were having to pay Ellen White such large royalties on her various books. Many authors did not take any royalties, and to help aid the cause, Uriah Smith, whose *Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation* was one of the best-selling Adventist books, decided that he,

too, would greatly reduce his book royalties so that the money could go back into the publishing work and further the cause, as well as reduce the price, making it easier to sell. By contrast, Ellen had become accustomed to getting the largest royalties of any author and, for many years going back to the 1860s, had received the full royalties on her sold books, not giving any of the profits to the publishers or canvassers who sold them.

According to *The Hope of Israel*, Ellen was getting 100 percent of the profits from her books in 1866. “We are credibly informed that her books are all published free; so that she will have all the profit on their sale.”¹⁶⁵ But by the 1880s, things had changed, and Ellen was now making 100 percent of the profit on her books in the first edition sold, but splitting the profit fifty-fifty in later editions of her books with the canvassers who peddled them. Yet, even under this arrangement, she was still receiving a very generous 15¢ a book, which translates into \$4.01 per book in 2019 money,¹⁶⁶ but she was disputing this as being too little. With this controversy brewing, the prophetess was told by some leading brethren of Uriah Smith’s noble, generous, and self-sacrificing willingness to significantly reduce the royalties he would receive on his books to further the work. Ellen found such a suggestion to be outrageous and unthinkable, and was clearly annoyed and humiliated by Smith’s example.

So, believe it or not, God gave her a “vision” on the heels of this suggestion, in which she was “shown that some men worked with Elder Smith, in an underhanded manner, in order to lead him to place the lowest possible royalties on his books.” Rather than giving Smith credit for being generous and self-sacrificing, the prophetess insisted that he had been deceived, manipulated, and duped into this arrangement for the purpose of trying to leverage her royalties. She continues with her visionary insights, “Elder Smith was deceived in the object of these men; he thought that they were really trying to advance the cause of God; and they obtained their desire.” She saw that these men didn’t care about the cause of God, but were guilty of “fraud.”

But the night after this plea was made, the matter was opened before me. I saw that they had visited Brother Smith and obtained his consent to a low royalty in order that they might present this as that which I and others should do. This was

obtaining terms of royalty by fraud. I was shown the spirit that prompted these men to action.¹⁶⁷

Again and again, we see Ellen having convenient “visions” which condemn and judge the motives of those who dare to disagree with her, question her visions, or threaten her power, authority, or elevated financial standing. The only fraud here was what she imposed on these poor publishers. Given the fact that she plagiarized such a great deal from others, it seems ironic that she would be grasping for royalties at all. Moreover, she was claiming that God was the source of her writings, and yet, unlike the prophets of the Bible (Elisha, 2 Kings 5:16; Daniel, Daniel 5:17; Peter, Acts 8:20; etc.) who refused to take money to represent God, Ellen (like Gehazi, 2 Kings 5:20) did not hesitate to make money (and a great deal of money) from the gift that God had supposedly given her. On top of this, she repeatedly used her “visions” to market her books, and insist that God was calling every church member to buy as many of them as possible (at very expensive prices).

The larger books, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Great Controversy*, and *Desire of Ages*, should be sold everywhere. These books contain truth for this time,—truth that is to be proclaimed in all parts of the world. Nothing is to hinder their sale [except her royalties]. Many more of our larger books might have been sold if church-members had been awake to the importance of the truths these books contain, and had realized their responsibility to circulate them. My brethren and sisters, will you not now make an effort to circulate these books? Work earnestly.¹⁶⁸

It is no wonder that Ellen made the equivalent of three million dollars in our money today from her book royalties alone. She had a foolproof formula that could not fail. Compile books quickly from the works of others, without giving them credit. Pass them off to naive followers as coming from God. Lay a guilt trip on those who did not buy and promote her books, as failing to live out the will of God. And keeping a set in a church library was not good enough, she insisted that they needed to be in every home.

The volumes of Spirit of Prophecy, and also the *Testimonies*, should be introduced into every Sabbath-keeping family, and the brethren should know their value and be urged to read them. It was not the wisest plan to place these books at a low figure and have only one set in a church. They should be in the library of every family and read again and again.¹⁶⁹

Yet, in spite of the great wealth she accumulated from her books alone, she still complained in 1885 that making fifteen cents a book (four dollars a book today) was unfair and not acceptable. “I am not satisfied with the income it brings to me. Some plan should have been devised whereby more than fifteen cents royalty per copy would come to me.” She went on in the same letter to threaten to take her book business elsewhere, if something wasn’t done to remedy this injustice. “I cannot submit to the arrangements made. They are unjust... I economize in every way possible, and still do not have sufficient to meet running expenses.”¹⁷⁰ As we shall see in the chapters ahead, Ellen did not economize in every way possible, but lived a lavish and extravagant lifestyle, where she still managed to overspend in spite of having tremendous wealth.

Uriah Smith versus Ellen White

The two Adventist figures that I am most familiar with are Ellen White and Uriah Smith. I have written a master’s thesis in history, a doctoral dissertation at Claremont, and three other books focusing on the life and ministry of Ellen White. While I spent fifteen years enacting the life of Uriah Smith in a dramatic portrayal entitled *Reflections on the Advent Way*, I had the privilege of performing this drama more than a hundred times at churches and universities across the United States as well as in the countries of New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and Europe, including a portion of it at the Utrecht, Netherlands, General Conference in 1995. I did extensive research writing that drama and became extremely familiar with the life of Uriah Smith.

So, I wanted to spend a brief portion of this book comparing the lives of these two Adventist pioneers, for I find the contrast to be striking. Smith was a young man of remarkable self-confidence, intelligence, ingenuity,

resilience, versatility, and creativity. By contrast, Ellen grew up with tremendous fears, self-doubt, low self-esteem, and very moderate intelligence and abilities, at best. Both Uriah and Ellen encountered severe physical trauma in their youth. Smith had his leg amputated due to infection at the age of twelve. And White had her tragic nose/head rock injury at the age of nine. But their responses to these events were opposite. Uriah overcame his disability with impressive success, not missing a beat in his education, and actually using the amputation to help him become an inventor. He patented an artificial leg with a movable ankle and a specialized school desk, which helped many others as well. And these were only the beginning of his inventions.

Smith also honed his talents as an engraver, hymn writer, and poet, before joining the editorial staff of the *Review* at the tender age of twenty-one and becoming the chief editor two years later, a position he would hold for fifty years, far longer than any other. He was an incredibly productive human being, writing twenty-four books in addition to his countless editorials, all penned with the care, creativity, and integrity of a master journalist, until he finally dropped dead of a stroke in his seventies on his way to his office at the *Review* in 1903. Uriah was a humble, forgiving man who admitted it when he was wrong, swallowed his pride, and worked under the editorship of the much younger A. T. Jones for a couple of years, and then befriended Jones after they had been archrivals at the 1888 General Conference. His talent, generosity, hard work, and character, along with his soft-spoken, gentle, self-effacing spirit, were an inspiration to nearly all who knew him.

By contrast, as we noted earlier, Ellen used her injury to control, manipulate, benefit from her “invalid status” (see chapter 3), avoid traditional female roles, and use as an excuse for academic and other failures. Ellen learned early that she could greatly better herself by manipulating family and others, and became an expert at this at an early age, a trait that she would perfect throughout her lifetime. Dishonesty and deceit became woven into her very being, even as she hid under the guise of feebleness and innocence. She became a master at pretending to be something she wasn’t. She presented as a modern-day prophet or prophetess, a messenger of God—who received the most detailed revelation

on virtually every topic, a seer into the personal lives and faults of others, a humble, modest, hardworking, self-sacrificing, spiritual giant.

When in reality, whatever visionary experiences she had as a shouting Methodist, they had nothing to do with the elaborate visionary claims she would make as an Adventist. She would use her “visions” to hurt and manipulate others in addition to obtaining great wealth. She would never admit she was wrong or repent of anything. She would live a lavish and hypocritical lifestyle. She would pretend to be a workaholic while stealing the ideas of others, falsely attributing these ideas to God, and increasingly relying on an ever-growing personal staff to do most of her work. She was an expert at choosing the easy way out. She was not self-sacrificing, but self-grasping, using her position and status to benefit herself throughout her lifetime. And she was not a spiritual giant, any more than Joseph Smith or any other religious pretender was a spiritual giant.

During my thirty-five years of ministry working in Adventism, I met many good people who reminded me more of Uriah Smith than they did of Ellen White. But to my sorrow, I would have to say that generally speaking, the leadership of the church functioned more in the deceitful and manipulative spirit of their female founder. This is not surprising, because a movement that was birthed by a spirit of dishonesty will generally continue to function in that spirit, until it acknowledges and repents so that it can turn from its evil ways. I tried to help bring such a change while I was part of the movement, and God only knows to what degree this book can help contribute to such a change now that I have been out of the movement for the last decade.

Holy Spirit and Rival Prophets

One of the great ironies of Adventism is that Ellen White stands as its lone prophet, in isolation from all others. This, of course, is totally at odds with what the New Testament teaches about the gift of prophecy and the prophetic spirit, but no one has ever accused Adventism of having a mature understanding of the Holy Spirit or prophecy. There was, however, a brief period in the history of Adventism where a few rival prophets to Ellen White surfaced and were being recognized by some leaders in the church. This controversy occurred right after the 1888 General Conference was

over, which isn't surprising, for where the true gospel is taught and received, the power of the Holy Spirit will usually follow. However, Ellen wasn't nearly as excited about Holy Spirit revival and rival prophets as she had been about the gospel at the 1888 GC, for she clearly perceived these prophetic individuals to be a threat.

The first prophetic rival to Ellen actually surfaced before the 1888 conference, even though most Adventists have never heard of her. She was from Petoskey, Michigan, and her name was Anna Garmire. As early as 1884, she claimed that she was receiving "visions" from God. She also had a lot in common with the early Ellen White, because she made the mistake of interpreting her "visions" to mean that God was going to "close probation" very soon, namely by the end of that year. Forgetting her own repeated errors and frailties in this regard, Ellen quickly dismissed her visions, stating that Ms. Garmire's inspiration came "more from her father than from the Lord."¹⁷¹ But other prophetic voices that cropped up in Adventism around this time were not so easily dismissed.

The most significant among these voices was a woman who came into prominence after the 1888 General Conference named Anna Rice Phillips. She was a visionary who moved in the gifts of the Spirit and received strong support from such Adventist leaders as W. W. Prescott, Stephen Haskell, A. T. Jones, and E. J. Waggoner. These men all believed that the church was desperately in need of Pentecostal revival, including miracles, signs and wonders, openness to faith healing, and all the other gifts of the Spirit, including speaking in unknown tongues. Waggoner even gave an address at the 1993 General Conference calling all believers to seek and receive the gift of prophecy. For years, Adventism had held a strong hostility toward, and fear of, such religion, based on the "visions" Ellen had claimed, connecting Pentecostalism and charismatic religion to spiritualism and false revival.¹⁷²

Phillips fit perfectly with a healthy view of the prophetic gift and the need for revival, because her "visions" were Christ centered and her simple lifestyle and loving manner stood in stark contrast to the lavish lifestyle and condemning testimonies of Ellen. She also was able to help fill the void that Mrs. White left when she took off for Australia for most of a decade, following the controversial 1888 conference. But her "exile" down under, did not prevent the prophetess from sending some very pointed testimonies

in correspondence with those leaders who supported Phillips. She made it clear that Phillips was “well-meaning and sincere, but mistaken.”¹⁷³ She also sent the brunt of her correspondence to Prescott who received fifty-two different letters from Ellen White between 1888 and 1915 dealing largely with this perceived threat. Her conclusion concerning Phillips was as follows.

The Word of God is your Counselor, the Word of God is your authority. Be very careful how you bring anything weaker to take its place... Satan would like nothing better than to call minds away from the Word, to look for and expect something outside of the Word to make them feel [good]. They should not have their attention called to dreams and visions.¹⁷⁴

Where was this quote in the past when Ellen was elevating her own testimonies and visions, claiming that she was not an “erring mortal?” “Those who are reproved by the Spirit of God should not rise up against the humble instrument. It is God, and not an erring mortal, who has spoken to save them from ruin.” Moreover, she was quick to assert that rejection of her testimonies resulted in being cut off from the Holy Spirit. “If they [her testimonies] are not heeded, the Holy Spirit is shut away from the soul.”¹⁷⁵ Given the very harsh, conflicting, contradicting, and even absurd nature of many of her testimonies, for those of us who are familiar with them, these words amount to nothing less than blasphemy. Ellen was guilty of the worst double standard when it came to the way she judged a prophetess like Phillips, or any others who threatened her, compared with how she viewed herself.

Once Ellen White was firmly established in the role of an Old Testament prophet in Adventist subculture, she had no intention of sharing her mantle with anyone else. Instead of encouraging the development of the prophetic gift, as it functioned in the New Testament, and was meant to function in post-biblical times, she protected her own ill-begotten gift (claiming far too much for it) and diminished and dismissed the gifts of others as “dangerous visions” that were competing with the word of God. The more SDA leaders knew about Ellen’s gift, the more they found this hypocritical counsel to be very difficult to swallow.

Australian Controversies

It wasn't just controversies about new prophets that kept Ellen writing testimonies when she "escaped" down to Australia. She now had the opportunity to create a whole new Adventist world on this virgin continent and, particularly, to implement her "vision" of education in a place where she was idolized and did not have to deal with an increasing number of leaders who were questioning her judgment and authority. As one president of the Australasian division has put it, "The servant of the Lord arrived in Australia only three years after the Australian Conference had been organized." The world church membership was now over 31,600 people, and Ellen was the only remaining founder alive—she truly enjoyed a celebrity status. "To have her connect with the work in its infancy was a great advantage. To be accepted without question as the messenger of the Lord brought immediate and lasting fruitage to the church."¹⁷⁶

Ellen was now in her element; she was being "accepted without question as the messenger of the Lord." And she would have a great deal to lay on the Australian Adventists, until some in leadership could hardly bear it. In the meantime, Ellen had very mixed feelings about her trip to Australia, for it afforded her great opportunities, but it had also been forced upon her in a manner that she was smarting over. The conference and GC leaders sent her to Australia as a missionary to develop the new work there, but also to ease the tensions she was experiencing with other church leaders, as well as the embarrassment connected to her being exposed in the public press as a plagiarist, an issue we will explore more in the next chapter.

Several months after arriving down under, she penned a short letter acknowledging the circumstances of her trip. "At times before leaving America, I thought that the Lord did not require me to go to a country so far away, at my age and when I was prostrated by overwork." Ellen loved to give the impression that she was always overworked, but as has been noted, and as we will see to a much greater degree, it was actually her large personal staff who were overworked. Even in Australia, she maintained a lesser staff of fifteen people, who served her every whim. She also claimed in the letter that she agreed to leave the country to be compliant with church leadership as she "ever tried" to do. "But I followed the voice of the Conference, as I have ever tried to do at times when I had no clear light

myself.”¹⁷⁷ Church leadership, no doubt, got a smile from this assertion, knowing that such occasions were extremely rare. A few years later, Ellen would write a letter to the GC president rebuking him for the role he played in failing to prevent her from being exiled to Australia.

Dear Brother Olsen,

I have not, I think, revealed the entire working that led me here to Australia. Perhaps you may never fully understand the matter. The Lord was not in our leaving America. He did not reveal that it was His will that I should leave Battle Creek. The Lord did not plan this, but He let you all move after your own imaginings... There was so great a willingness to have us leave, that the Lord permitted this thing to take place. Those who were weary of the testimonies borne were left without the persons who bore them. Our separation from Battle Creek was to let men have their own will and way, which they thought superior to the way of the Lord. The result is before you. Had you stood in the right position the move would not have been made at that time. The Lord would have worked for Australia by other means.¹⁷⁸

Clearly to Ellen, Olsen, her handpicked president, was at fault for her being banished to Australia. Previous to this, she had sent a number of testimonies to the Battle Creek Church and Battle Creek College condemning them for their failure to live up to the high standards and demands that God required of them. A lack of godliness and love for amusement were at the top of her list. She railed against the corrupt worldly practices of solitary vice, novel reading, theater attendance, dancing, wearing of cosmetics and jewelry, listening to opera and jazz, and playing chess, checkers, or backgammon. She declared, “These amusements open the door for great evil,” and they are “amusements which we cannot approve, because heaven condemns them.”¹⁷⁹

The prophetess had revealed God’s (her) “vision” for proper education back in 1872, and read it to the board with the expectation that it would be implemented in Battle Creek. But Sydney Brownsberger, the first president of Battle Creek College, in spite of his impressive education and credentials, admitted he did “not know anything about the conducting of such a school,” and failed to live up to the prophet’s plans. W. W. Prescott,

his successor in the presidency, made every effort to apply her “vision” of true education. However, the vocational, as well as the industrial, departments were operating at such a loss that they had to be dropped, and the manual labor component was replaced by a more popular physical education and sports program. Ellen was not happy with these changes, but it was this latter change that brought a conflict that would hit its height while Ellen was in Australia.

In 1893, just as the prophetess was promoting her plans to construct the first Adventist school for Christian workers in Australia, she was sent a copy of a newspaper article from the *Battle Creek Daily Journal* that sent her into orbit. It described a sporting event at the Adventist college between the “American all-stars” and the “British all-stars” as a “Great International Football Game.”¹⁸⁰ Ellen was “aghast” at this report, and combined with rumors of another football game reported in the same paper between the SDA college and a public school which ended in an argument, the prophet fired off a stern rebuke to President Prescott. The result of Ellen’s complete condemnation of competitive sports was that Battle Creek and all other Adventist schools would eliminate competitive sports for most of a century until the late 1970s and 1980s when views of her inspiration would begin to dramatically change.

On a personal note, as a kid who loved and excelled in competitive sports, her testimonies changed my life. While I was in public school, sports brought me great joy and played a major role in my identity, but this important part of my life was completely destroyed in 1966 when I was transferred to an Adventist school in junior high. I was told by teachers that God condemned all forms of competition through His prophet. But twenty years later, this policy had completely reversed in most Adventist schools. Evidentially, God had thoroughly changed His mind. My mom tells the story of being pregnant with me, her firstborn, as a very young-looking twenty-year-old in 1952. She was forbidden at that time, being an Adventist employee, from wearing a wedding ring, based on Ellen White’s condemnations.

She talks about the terrible stares and comments she received in a California culture, where at that time there was a huge stigma attached to pregnancy out of wedlock. Again, by the late 1970s, after the 1919 Bible Conference minutes had been rediscovered, and the church became more

aware of Ellen's extensive plagiarism, this policy was totally reversed. I became the pastor of my first church in Lindsay, California, in 1976, and as these changes hit the church, I heard numerous testimonies from people who had lost their jobs, given up their professions, were disowned by their families, etc., all because of dictates from Ellen White that were now being reversed in the church. The denomination, on a practical level, now realized that Ellen's pronouncements were not really from God, but in their theory and theology continued to insist that she was a true prophet who got her "visions" from the Lord. They could not afford to let the "house of cards" collapse.

Jesus came not just to save the world (Matthew 1:21), but to remove religion from the realm of rules and regulations. And to do so under the anointing of joy (Hebrews 1:9). Ellen White managed to restore a whole bunch of rules and regulations to the realm of religion, and to do so in a manner that stole a great deal of joy from people's lives. This is the reason that so many older Adventists feel great anger and frustration when they learn of Ellen's plagiarism and other faults. She stole the joy from their lives, and then it all proved to be a fraud.

Meanwhile, back in Australia, Ellen was about the business of building the "ideal school," and would not be deterred. She used her powerful influence to convince the constituency to buy a gigantic plot of land (1,450 acres), in Cooranbong (land of the flies), despite the fact that many local leaders opposed the purchase, warning that the land would not support the agricultural plans that the prophet proposed. Much controversy and debate ensued, but at Ellen's urging, the land was purchased for only \$3 an acre. Yet, after the down payment was made, an agricultural expert was hired, and his devastating report confirmed the local rancher's fears. However, instead of forfeiting the down payment and walking away from the deal as local leaders wanted, Ellen stubbornly pushed ahead.

She bought a portion of the property herself and had a house built on it (one of her many real estate properties). Then she personally loaned another \$5,000 (worth at least \$150,000 today) to the school to start construction on buildings, a sum that reveals just how wealthy she was. But she ultimately got her way, and the school officially opened in 1897. Yet, even with this victory in hand, it didn't take long for Ellen to destroy and alienate the school's first headmaster, C. B. Hughes, who thought he had done everything

possible to please her and follow her blueprint. By his third year, the prophet's hammer came down.

What terrible sin did Hughs commit?

On a picnic day celebrating the founding of the school, he honored Ellen White by having her speak in the morning assembly. Then he allowed the students to play innocent games in the afternoon with an emphasis on fun recreation and without scorekeeping or competition. Games such as bobbing for apples, running with eggs in teaspoons, and three-legged sack races were featured. Hughs felt the day was a great success and had no inkling that the prophet was offended. But as she had done with Battle Creek games, Ellen claimed to have a "vision" in the "night season" which caused her to denounce the activities of the day in the strongest words. She "saw" that the students "engaged in grotesque mimicry" and that they "acted out the mind of the enemy."¹⁸¹ The headmaster was completely blindsided and devastated by the attack, and replied to her rebuke with the following words.

If Sister White had struck a blow full to my face, I do not think I would have felt so hurt as I did at her words. What she said sounded so unreasonable to me. I believed that what we had done the day before was for the best interests of the students. She talked to me as an old woman who had no sympathy with the needs of youth. To say that I was very indignant hardly expresses the feeling I had, but I had a great deal of respect for Sister White, so notwithstanding the grievous mistake I thought she was making, I replied not a word.¹⁸²

Hughs hadn't gotten the memo that the prophet doesn't make mistakes. She only speaks for God, and often in very harsh and condemning words. Her willingness to devastate someone who was doing his level best to support her "vision" of education is just another example of the prophet's mental and emotional instability. No doubt, she was feeling intense stress and pressure regarding the challenges to her inspiration that were taking place back home in the States, but this kind of behavior hardly convinced people that these challenges were ill founded. As she had done with William Gage and so many others, Ellen used an innocent victim like

Hughs to strongly assert her absolute authority, as if she were an Old Testament prophet, and destroy a man who was doing his best to practice what she had preached. Yet her status generally continued to increase in spite of her mental illness and spiritual pathology, as we shall see. For it would only get worse in the case of Fanny Bolton.

Questions

1. Is it a coincidence that Ellen White's endorsements and condemnations of the General Conference's authority directly paralleled her own personal self-interest?
2. How did God change from a perfectionist and a gross legalist to a great gospel advocate, according to the "visions" of Ellen White?
3. How would you compare Ellen White to Uriah Smith in terms of character, integrity, and especially their respective attitudes toward their book royalties?
4. How did Ellen oppose any potential rival prophets, reverse her position on charismatic religion, and impose her "visions" on the people of Australia?



Fannie Bolton

Photo courtesy of Free Pictures SDA Pioneers

CHAPTER 12

Bookmakers, Banishment, and Reorganization

The Lord hates all deception, secrecy, and guile. This is Satan's work; the work of God is open and frank.

—Ellen White

Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbor.

—Jeremiah 23:30

The story is told of a CEO who was fired by his board and, while collecting his personal belongings, met his replacement on the way out. Wanting to avoid anything uncomfortable, the former CEO said, "I have nothing against you. This has been a terrible period in my life, and I only wish you the best. Before I go, let me give you three envelopes. If things get really bad, open the first. If they get worse, the second, and if they become unbearable, the third." The new CEO thanked him, finished moving, and began his work. A few months went by, and he had made no progress, and was called in by the board of directors. He decided it was time to open the first envelope. Written down was the advice, "Blame conditions on your predecessor." It worked. The board seemed pacified. He said he'd undo the damage. A few more months went by with still no progress. The CEO faced another grilling by the board. He opened the second envelope. It said, "Tell them you're in the middle of a reorganization." It worked. He was granted more time. It soon became evident that whatever he tried, he could make no progress in a dysfunctional system. He was faced with one more meeting before the board and had no clues. He took the third envelope and read the instructions: "Prepare three envelopes."

What is more powerful than a CEO? A board who wants to blame him or her as their victim. And what is way more powerful than a CEO and a

board? A prophet who can make them both believe that she hears directly from God! Boards like to blame CEOs and make them their scapegoats. CEOs like to blame boards when they can get away with it. But Ellen was able to blame CEOs, presidents, boards, editors, and anyone else she wanted to scapegoat, without retribution, because she always had God as the source of her attribution. And as we will see later in this chapter, she knew how to pull off a reorganization to her benefit as well. But most of this chapter will focus on her bookmakers, Fannie Bolton and, to a lesser degree, Marian Davis. The burdens the prophetess laid on these women were pathological beyond belief.

Exposed by the Secular Press

One of the reasons Ellen fled to Australia for nearly ten years was that she was coming under increasing attack for her practice of plagiarism in the United States. On March 20, 1889, the first public charge or accusation of plagiarism against Ellen White to appear in the press was published in the *Healdsburg Enterprise*. This accusing article was entitled “Is Mrs. E. G. White a Plagiarist?” It began by quoting Webster’s definition of a plagiarist, “One that purloins the writings of another and puts them off as his own.” It then proceeded to cite and display repeated examples of Ellen’s copying from such works as *The Life of William Miller*, *History of the Waldensees*, *The Sanctuary*, *History of the Reformation*, and *History of the Sabbath*. The five-page article then concluded that “any literary critic” or common man confronted with the evidence would have acknowledged that “Mrs. White is a plagiarist, a literary thief.”¹⁸³ The article also made it clear that this was just a small sample of what could have been provided.

The 1880s and 1890s proved to be very difficult decades for the prophetess because her plagiarism was not only being exposed in Babylon by the secular press, but also was increasingly being questioned and attacked by Adventist insiders, including the prophet’s own editors, or bookmakers, as she called them. It was her bookmakers in particular, Marian Davis and Fannie Bolton, who had the most sophisticated understanding of how the prophetess was operating, but it was not their job to determine what sources Ellen was secretly borrowing from in the privacy of her own library. Rather, they had to try to make sense of the messy

manuscripts the prophet would hand them, and expect them to redeem. No one in Ellen White's own day realized how extensive her plagiarism was compared to what we know today. Even a White Estate insider like Warren Johns issued the following official statement about Ellen's copying.

Evidence for literary borrowing can be substantiated in virtually all nine volumes of the (1) *Testimonies for the Church*, in her (2) *Review and Herald* and *Signs of the Times* articles, and in (3) all of the books published during her lifetime. The only exception may be *Early Writings*. At this time, I am not aware of any significant literary borrowing in that work, but it would not be surprising if it should come to light.¹⁸⁴

It boggles the mind to consider how the church has claimed that the sixty-six books supposedly written by Ellen (more than one hundred when you include compilations), the five thousand periodical articles, and the fifty thousand manuscript pages are proof that God supernaturally worked through this injured woman with only a fifth-grade education. When you consider that these books have been translated into more languages than any book other than the Bible (distributed to twenty million SDAs around the globe) and made ridiculous sums of money for Ellen White, her family, and the church, it is no exaggeration to say that Ellen White was the most successful plagiarist and con artist of all time. But she used and abused a lot of people to get there, and Marian Davis along with Fannie Bolton were probably her two most prominent victims.

A Tale of Two Bookies

Marian Davis was only four years old when her mother became an Adventist in 1851. She was a young woman of fragile health whose life was struck with tragedy in 1876 when her sister Grace and her mother Elmira died within ten days of each other. Marian was a trained teacher who found the classroom hard on her delicate health, so she worked as a proofreader at the *Review and Herald* publishing plant before Ellen asked her to become a literary assistant, when Marian was thirty-two years old. Their first trip together was to Colorado, by wagon train, in 1879. And they worked together so well that Ellen asked her to become a permanent partner. Marian

was a hard worker and extremely conscientious, wanting to please the prophetess in everything she did and ensure that she meticulously presented Ellen's writings as perfectly as possible.

Initially they made a happy and productive team, as Marian accompanied the prophet on all her trips around the world. They traveled to California in 1882, to Europe three years later, to Michigan in 1889, and she joined Ellen for years in Australia beginning in 1891. Before long, the prophetess fondly referred to Marian as her bookmaker, noting that Marian takes all my "published articles" and "pastes them in blank books." She also has copies of "all the letters I write" in more than thirty binders of material, which she sometimes combines with other "general religious information" to "aid in her bookmaking activities."¹⁸⁵ The general religious information that Ellen was referring to was material she had taken from other authors without attribution, and the more familiar Marian became with this process, the more uncomfortable she was with the role she was expected to play.

The process that increasingly bothered Marian was that Ellen was forever giving her handwritten manuscripts that contained some quotation marks where she copied word for word from other authors (without proper annotation of the sources). But these same manuscripts left out quotation marks where they should have been included, and also contained large amounts of materials from other authors, minimally paraphrased, with no references or acknowledgments. Marian, who was a very skillful editor, became more and more uncomfortable with this situation as she became more aware of how extensive the borrowing was, so she took up the matter with Ellen and her son Willie. The prophetess and her son acknowledged the problem, but decided that due to the public demand for Ellen's books, too much time would be required to study each passage and document the sources correctly, so the decision was made to "leave out the quotation marks entirely."¹⁸⁶ The reality was that if proper attribution had occurred, there would have been nothing significant contributed by the author. Ellen was taking virtually all of her history, theology, thoughts, and other content from other authors without attribution. The notion that she was getting substantial content from God is simply false.

Leaving out quotation marks and references altogether was rationalized as necessary to meet the demand for these plagiarized books to finish the work of God on earth. And since "every good thing comes from God," and

the “earth is the Lord’s,” all this information was seen as belonging to God, who was giving it to Ellen, and, therefore, it was hers. This included the very generous book royalties and profits that came to the prophet. This kind of thinking can justify stealing your neighbor’s car or motor home. This decision only added to the stress and anxiety that Marian was feeling, because she was being held accountable and being saddled with the responsibility of putting the books together. So, the tensions between Ellen and her bookmaker began to grow. And the more they grew, the more Ellen would refer to her as poor little Marian instead of her bookmaker. The prophetess wrote a letter to her daughter-in-law Mary, complaining that Marian was so meticulous and conscientious that she was badgering her son Willie with every little thing.

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

Ellen and her son make a decision to flagrantly plagiarize the works of others, and then get frustrated with Marian and blame her for having questions and concerns about how to implement such an impossible task. The prophetess went on in the letter to suggest that Marian’s pickiness could well be the death of both her and Willie. Clearly, this was an exercise in projection. For it was Ellen who was pushing her literary assistant to the brink of a nervous breakdown.

She must just carry some of these things that belong to her part of the work, and not bring them before him nor worry his mind with them. Sometimes I think she will kill us both, all unnecessarily, with her little things she can just as well settle herself as to bring them before us. Every little change of a word she wants us to see. I am about tired of this business.¹⁸⁷

Ellen was sick and tired of her book editor trying to save her from the charge of plagiarism and being sued, or put in prison. Marian was at her wit’s end, but had nowhere to turn, because the Whites had already decided

that their literary theft was God ordained. And while it is true that Marian had agreed under pressure to the Whites' solution to their problem, to simply include a general acknowledgement of other sources without naming them in the preface of her books, this dishonest strategy came under severe attack and criticism to the point where Marian was crying herself to sleep every night, and her family became extremely worried about her fragile health. One of Ellen's unsympathetic biographers, Dudley M. Canright, referred to Marian during this period in these words.

She was one day heard moaning in her room. Going in, another worker inquired the cause of her trouble. Miss Davis replied: "I wish I could die! I wish I could die!" "Why what is the matter?" asked the other. "Oh," Miss Davis said, "This terrible plagiarism."¹⁸⁸

It fell on Marian to try to hide how extensive and to what degree Ellen was plagiarizing from others, and this, along with the very heavy workload being laid on her, was an overwhelming burden. It went against Marian's character and journalistic training and integrity to carry out this task, but she loved Ellen and the Advent movement dearly. To try to cope with her situation, she confided in Dr. Charles Stewart, a physician in Battle Creek, and asked him to keep her identity confidential. Later, he expressed her frustrations to Ellen White in a letter without naming her. He wrote, "I am informed by a very trustworthy source, that it was very difficult to arrange the matter for your books in such a way as to prevent the readers from detecting that many of the ideas had been taken from other authors."¹⁸⁹ Marian knew that this was expected of her, and it weighed so heavily on her, along with her increasing workload, that she was close to a breakdown when Ellen decided to lighten her burden by hiring a second bookmaker.

The Tragic Case of Fannie Bolton

One of the saddest and most tragic examples of spiritual abuse in the life of Ellen White was the way she treated her literary assistant Fannie Bolton. Fannie was a very gifted young woman who was born in Chicago, was the daughter of a Methodist minister, and graduated from the fine Preparatory High School of Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, where she

delivered a very powerful commencement address, entitled, “The Flight of the Gods.” She went on to attend Lady’s Seminary at Evanston College, and to land a prestigious job as a correspondent shortly out of college for the *Chicago Daily Inter-Ocean*, a predecessor of the *Chicago Tribune*. She was converted to Adventism by Pastor George B. Starr in 1885, and became a very devoted church member who conscientiously attempted to live by all the writings of Ellen White.

She was thrilled to not only have the privilege of meeting Ellen in person at a Springfield, Illinois, camp meeting in 1887, but also covering her as a reporter and doing stories about her sermons in the newspaper. The prophetess was very impressed with her writing, and decided that she would be the perfect helpmate for the overworked Marian, so she offered her a job. The twenty-eight-year-old Fannie was initially flattered and excited to get this opportunity with the prophet of her new faith. But it didn’t take long for Fannie to become shocked and confused by what she would see. Ellen asked Fannie if she would meet her at the Chicago depot so they could travel together back to California. When the prophet was not found with her party, Fannie would later write about the trauma she experienced when she and her pastor looked for Ellen. “Elder Starr hunted around till he found her behind a screen in the restaurant very gratified in eating big white oysters with vinegar, pepper and salt.”

And on the same trip, Willie White entered their car with a “thick piece of bloody beefsteak” for Sara McEnterfer, another White employee. This was unbelievable to Fannie, who meticulously “lived up to the testimonies with all faithfulness discarding meat, butter, fish, fowl and the supper meal, believing that as the ‘Testimonies’ say, ‘no meat-eater will be translated.’”¹⁹⁰ Psychologically, it is fascinating to explore how Ellen could be so careless about her hypocrisy around a new employee that she didn’t know well, who would function in her most inner circle. It seems that the prophetess had gotten away with so much for so long, at this point in her career, that she felt a sense of invulnerability and entitlement. But this is not to imply that Fannie wasn’t subjected to a very thorough orientation about how things worked when they got to their destination.

Once in California, Fanny was given an orientation for her new position by Willie White and Dores Robinson, Ellen’s grandson-in-law, who wanted to ensure that their new editor would fit in well. She was informed that she

would be working under the direction of Marian to ease her workload in any way possible. She was also oriented as to the nature of Ellen's visions, according to White and Robinson. They made it clear that "matters revealed to Mrs. White in vision, were not a word for word narration of events with their lessons, but that they were generally flash-light or panoramic views of various scenes in the experiences of men, sometimes in the past, and sometimes in the future."¹⁹¹ This description of visionary experiences is certainly more in keeping with typical post-New Testament visionaries, but it was not the kind of direct revelation from God that Adventists had been taught, or led to believe, about Ellen White.

One of my doctoral committee professors at Claremont, Ann Taves, has written an excellent book entitled *Fits, Trances and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James*.¹⁹² She documents how common trances and "visions" were in the nineteenth century, and thoroughly explores the cultural, emotional, philosophical, psychological, and religious factors that contributed to these phenomena. It is my belief that Ellen did experience some form of "visions" and trances while she was in the highly emotional and charismatic community of the shouting Methodists. It is no longer this author's view that these necessarily came from God. But when she moved into the Adventist subculture, which was generally ignorant and even suspicious of such experience, she saw her opportunity to exploit this ignorance and to make visionary claims that promoted her to a place of leadership in the movement.

During my many years of involvement with John Wimber's Vineyard Church, and in my study of charismatic religious experience since 1985, I have seen a lot of what can be termed as both healthy and unhealthy charismatic experience. It is my observation as a student of Adventist history that Anna Rice Phillips, whom we have already discussed, comes much closer to a healthy prophetic visionary than anything we find in the life of Ellen White. In Ellen's case, the more you objectively know, the more you are forced to the conclusion that she was a fraud and a very successful con artist, and that she had many innocent victims who suffered greatly because of her false claims. Fannie Bolton was just one of the most prominent examples of the prophet's casualties. One gifted Adventist biographer of Fannie has made an insightful observation.

Had Ellen White been prescient, she would never have employed Fannie Bolton or Marian Davis as her editors. Nor would she have written the letters to Fannie and Marian that appeared in “The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents” released by the Ellen G. White Estate in 1982. But she did not know the end from the beginning; and as a result, the struggle over the dark secret they shared was to belong irrevocably to the annals of the Seventh-day Adventist church.¹⁹³

It is fascinating to note that God supposedly gave Ellen White “visions” and divine insights into every imaginable subject, and into the private lives of friend and foe alike. But He totally let her down and was silent about the problems that would arise with her and Marian, to say nothing of Fannie. Why didn’t God warn her that these women would become terribly bothered and conflicted about her plagiarism? Why didn’t He lead her to helpers who were not conscientious and who would gladly profit by furthering the prophet’s fraud? The answer is obvious. Ellen never got such “visions” and messages from God about anything, and God is not in the business of partnering with con artists.

Because both Marian and Fannie were allowed into the inner sanctum of the prophet’s world, and expected to do much of her writing for her, they both became intimately aware of how the prophetess was operating, and once the two of them were together, they naturally commiserated and consulted with each other about their perceptions of what was going on. For most of the first year that Fannie and Marian worked together, Ellen, Willie, and Dores were superlative in their praise of Fannie. They were thrilled with her abilities, and were not aware that both editors were very uncomfortable with what they were being asked to do. On February 13, 1888, Ellen wrote, “Fannie Bolton is a treasure to me. We are harmonious, all working unitedly and in love.”¹⁹⁴

Willie and Dores seemed equally impressed, as they recalled many years later. Fannie “was recommended to her [Ellen] as a young woman of rare talents, of good education, and an earnest Christian.” Her selection for employment initially proved highly beneficial for Ellen, Marian, and Fannie. In fact, Fannie “proved to be brilliant and entertaining, and, although somewhat erratic at times, was loved by the other members of the

family.”¹⁹⁵ But this could not last, because both Marian and Fannie had become increasingly aware that what the prophet was asking them to do was wrong, unethical, dishonest, immoral, and, in many cases, illegal. Fannie, being younger, more professionally trained in journalistic ethics, and more inclined to be a whistleblower than her elder bookie, began to speak out and speak to others in ways that brought great fears of exposure to the prophetess.

The more Ellen became aware that her two bookmakers were reinforcing each other’s doubts about what she was expecting them to do, the more she blamed Fannie for what she perceived to be Marian’s change of attitude. Ellen complained in writing that Fannie “would talk to my workers, especially Marian, and get her stirred up so that I could hardly get along with Marian. She was like another person, infused with a spirit that was excitable and unexplainable.”¹⁹⁶ God forbid that anyone would become excitable about being asked to plagiarize and publish the famous works of others under another person’s name, while that person was claiming to get the information from God! And being hailed by her followers as a great prophet.

Marian and Fannie were said to have made Ellen’s *Desire of Ages* sing, with their great prose and editing skills. But the reality was that Ellen was copying from well-known authors like William Hanna, John Harris, Alfred Edersheim, Daniel March, and Henry Melvill. She was then handing over her messy handwritten manuscripts to Marian and Fannie, and they were expected to convert the material into powerful prose, while hiding the fact that the information was plagiarized from others. Ellen was also stealing material from sermons that she heard by both Adventist and non-Adventist ministers alike, and again without attribution, claiming to have received this material from God. Marian and Fannie were both smart enough to realize that they could publish these books themselves by copying from great authors and cut out the middlemen, Ellen and God, who were really contributing nothing.

Blaming the Victims

It is little wonder that Marian and Fannie were “excitable” as well as horrified by the hoax and fraud that they were being asked to perpetuate and

paid small salaries to participate in. Yet, somehow in the prophet's world, what they were doing ended up being their fault. Ellen's true believers were brainwashed into thinking that Marian and Fannie were simply copyists, as they referred to them, whose work was limited to mechanical editing of spelling, grammar, and punctuation, and that all the content came from God. Ellen, herself, had promoted this thinking, and she began to become unhinged when her real bookmakers were no longer willing to remain silent. So even though God never warned her not to hire Marian or Fannie, now God was quick to give her convenient "visions" of condemnation to put these two in their place.

Whenever things really got tough for Ellen, she pulled out her secret weapon, her prophetic trump card, specific "visions" from the Almighty. And she usually did so in the context of physical frailty, malady, or weakness to emphasize that she was just the humble vessel. She was not the one condemning her enemies. It was God who had opened the heavens to vindicate His mistreated prophet. This is exactly what happened when things got too hot with Marian and Fannie. Marian had long felt guilty about the role she was playing, covering up the plagiarism of Ellen, but she had kept quiet about it. Fannie was not so congenial, and she felt it her duty to disillusion leaders in the church of the false information they had been given about the prophet's inspiration. She tried to be subtle, but the more she learned, from Marian, the more distressed she became.

One of the first revelations that troubled her most occurred when she showed a manuscript she was working on to Marian, and Davis asked her if she had compared the chronology in Mrs. White's materials to Edersheim, or any other standard religious work. Surprised, Fannie responded that surely the Lord was a "correct historian." Marian replied, "That may be true, but Ellen is not."¹⁹⁷ Fannie became further flabbergasted when she discovered, while comparing Ellen's words to standard works, that straight-out plagiarism was occurring. She was

shocked and astonished to face a paragraph exactly like the one in the article she was copying, although there was no sign in the articles of it being a quotation, and on turning a page found a whole page which in the articles was only changed enough to prevent its being exact quotation.¹⁹⁸

This opened a door that led Fannie to discover that multiple authors were being used by Ellen with no credit given, nor were Marian and Fannie acknowledged in any way in Ellen's books for the great deal of original work they were contributing. When Marian saw how disturbed her younger colleague was becoming about these facts, she tried to calm Fannie down with a rationalization that she had been forced to adopt to justify her own silence. She told Fannie, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."¹⁹⁹ But this hardly comforted her partner, because Fannie saw literary theft for the serious matter it was. She decided to go to Ellen White directly to confront her herself.

Taking this biblical approach, she expressed her deep conviction that what she was being asked to do was dishonest and at odds with all literary ethics. She appealed to the prophet to observe the "principle of ordinary justice and literary honesty...for truth's sake,"²⁰⁰ and to apply the moral rules of writing. There is no preserved record of how Ellen responded, but nothing changed in her methods, and shortly after this, in June of 1889, she attempted to pawn Fannie off as an employee for Charles Jones and his *Pacific Health Journal*, without success.

Fanny continued to believe and insist that "Sister White should acknowledge her editors and every source from which she obtained suggestion or expression."²⁰¹ And in the fall of 1890 Ellen fired her, in spite of her talent and productivity, which was twice that of any other worker. Being fired was devastating to Fannie, because Adventism had become her identity. She had gone to work for the prophet in the first place because she believed it would strengthen her spiritually, and make it more likely that she would be saved. She wrote to Ellen:

I felt that you were the servant of God, and that I should be with you, there would be more hope of my salvation, than if I remained in any other branch of work. I thought that were I editing your writings, I should be found in the time of judgment giving meat in due season.²⁰²

Now Fannie found herself confused, conflicted, and filled with spiritual insecurity. She felt that she was being unjustly mistreated by the church prophet because she was standing for moral principle and literary ethics.

Yet, she was so identified with Adventism that she was afraid to leave it. Ellen took advantage of this situation by accusing Fannie of disloyalty and heaping guilt on her. Instead of correcting her own immoral and unethical practices, Ellen blamed the victim, like any typical abuser. She needed Fannie, but on her terms. She wasn't about to change. Between 1887 when she first hired Fannie and 1897 when she vowed, for the last time, to her abused helper, "I will cut off the influence of your tongue in every way I can,"²⁰³ Ellen hired and fired Fannie four different times.

As long as Fannie served her purposes, Ellen took advantage of her considerable talents. But the moment Fannie would raise questions about her plagiarism or speak of it to others, Ellen would claim to have visions, attacking her, condemning her, and even accusing her of being "demon possessed."²⁰⁴ Ellen never did address the root problem of her own dishonesty, fraud, and plagiarism, except to make one disclaimer, that people were not spiritual enough to understand her methods.

Should I attempt to vindicate my course to those who do not appreciate the spiritual character of the work which is laid upon me, it would only expose myself and the work to misconception and misrepresentation. To present the matter before other minds would be useless, for there are but few who are really so connected with God [who] see beneath the surface appearance as to understand it. This work is one that I cannot explain.²⁰⁵

To talk about the spiritual character of her work, when it was overwhelmingly based on plagiarism and fraud, takes a lot of nerve. To suggest that others could not understand the nature of her work because they were not enough "connected with God" is even worse and an insult to God. Of course, Ellen could not explain her work, because there is no explanation, justification, or rationalization for literary theft, gross deception, and attributing such things to the Almighty. Ellen had a lot to lose by church members becoming aware of her evil ways. And she knew that Fannie was her biggest threat in this regard. As she would acknowledge to Merritt Kellogg in 1896, before severing herself from Fannie for the fourth and final time, "Fanny Bolton shall never write another line for me. She can hurt me as no other person can." As Kellogg observed, "A few

days later Miss Bolton was sent back to America, from that day to this my eyes have been open.”²⁰⁶

We know what Ellen did wrong to cause the repeated rifts between her and Fanny. She lied, deceived, plagiarized, and misrepresented God. She asked Marian and Fanny to plagiarize for her, and to write articles taken from other authors under her name, without giving them or her editors any credit, and giving the impression that these thoughts came directly from God. Fanny was devastated by this as she described to Merritt Kellogg.

She told...that she was “writing all the time for Sister White.” Furthermore, she said that most of what she wrote was “published in the *Review and Herald* ...as having been written by Sister White under inspiration of God... I am greatly distressed over this matter, for I feel that I am acting a deceptive part. The people are being deceived about the inspiration of what I write. I feel that it is a great wrong that anything which I write should go out under Sister White’s name as an article specially inspired of God. What I write should go out over my own signature; then credit would be given where credit belongs.”²⁰⁷

What Fanny suggests here would seem to be common sense. But what did Fannie do to draw the ire of the prophet? She identified wrongdoing on the part of the prophet and spoke to her about it. When she got no positive response, she expressed her concerns to some others. This was her real sin, but Ellen laid guilt on Fannie by claiming she was not fully converted.

“My prayer is that God will convert the poor child [Fannie], that she may understand the leadings of His Holy Spirit.”²⁰⁸ The “poor child” had not fully died to self, as the prophet presumed she herself had, and therefore, Ellen always had something to make Fannie feel guilty about. Psychologically, it is not difficult to see what happened with Fannie and Ellen White. Ellen was preoccupied with political position and power, but wanted to be perceived exclusively as a great spiritual leader.

She had an approval-seeking personality, suffered from God delusions of grandeur, and used God to ensure that her followers kept her on a pedestal and that her detractors were thoroughly condemned. She knew that Fanny was capable of bringing down this whole house of cards and exposing her

fraud more effectively than anyone else. So, the reason she kept employing her, after firing her, was to keep her under control. But whenever Fanny was in a state of being fired, Ellen received “visions” condemning her, until she would put forth some statement of repentance. After all, who can truly die 100 percent to self, except the sanctified prophet herself? So, there was always something for Fanny to repent about. We see this pattern repeated over and over again with these two, until Fanny is finally physically broken, driven into a mental breakdown, and hospitalized in an asylum on two different occasions.

The first time Fanny was fired, which was shocking to her, she decided to go back to school at the University of Michigan and tried to finish the manuscripts in her possession that needed editing. Ellen construed this to be a negative and deceptive thing, accusing Fanny of keeping these manuscripts as a pretext to give others the impression she was still employed, adding “I see my folly now.” Fanny was horrified by this accusation, and tried to make her peace with the prophet, writing the following apologetic letter in hopes of reconciliation.

I can not help writing to you because God has helped me so much since I last saw you. I did feel so sad about being severed from your work when I had just become so reconciled, so anxious to do it; but I cast all my perplexity on God.²⁰⁹

Now, Ellen had Fannie right where she wanted her, seeking to get back into the prophet’s good graces. She didn’t respond to Fannie for a year, knowing that her former employee was wanting back in her employ. But to the surprise of her whole staff, Ellen decided to invite Fannie to travel with her to Australia in the place of Sara McEnterfer who had contracted malaria. Ellen gave Fannie the opportunity to resume her work, hoping that she had learned her lesson about calling attention to the prophet’s plagiarisms. And initially, things started well, as Fannie continued to produce an amazing amount of work for the prophetess. As long as she kept quiet, the prophet benefitted tremendously from her talents and the fact that she was a workaholic. But, after two years of tremendous productivity, Fannie was ready for a break, and attended a January camp meeting in Melbourne. In her discussions there with friends and interested parties, she

again fell back into her old habits of revealing Ellen's writing methods to others. This got back to Ellen, and the prophetess immediately had a "vision" which she revealed to Pastor George Starr and to Marian.

There appeared a chariot of gold and horses of silver above me, and Jesus, in royal majesty, was seated in the chariot... Then there came the words rolling down over the clouds from the chariot from the lips of Jesus, "Fannie Bolton is your adversary! Fanny Bolton is your adversary!" repeated three times.²¹⁰

Ellen wasted no time punishing her assistant again for telling the truth. On February 6, 1894, she shot a letter off to Fannie, firing her for the second time. "Now, my sister, I do not want you to be any longer connected with me in my work. I mean now, for your good, that you should never have another opportunity to do as you have done in the past."²¹¹ It is in this letter that Ellen insists Fannie is "not spiritual enough" to understand her methods, for they "cannot be explained," and accuses her of being "not safe" (meaning not safe to keep her immoral secrets), lacking "self-control," and "deceived."

But she saves her real vitriol and condemnation of Fannie for the letters she sends to General Conference president Olson and her son Willie at the same time. The day before, February 5, she wrote Olson comparing Fannie to Lucifer. "Her ardent love for praise and ambition was very similar to that presented to me in regard to the workings of Satan in the heavenly courts to bring disaffection among the angels."²¹² Ellen was wanting to do damage control, given the recent attacks on her that appeared in the public press accusing her of being a plagiarist. She knew Fannie had the goods on her, and could totally discredit her prophetic claims. So, she intended to destroy and discredit Fannie first, with the help of "visions" from God.

The next day she wrote her son Willie, insisting, because of Fannie's "love of ambition" and "praise" that "Satan had entered to not only ruin her soul, but to imperil the work given me of God." She compared herself to Moses and "Fannie to Aaron and Miriam," who were punished by the Almighty for rebelling against "the appointed of God." Because Fannie had been deceived by "Satan's suggestions," she had become "blinded by the

enemy.”²¹³ But Ellen wasn’t done. She would soon write Marian, as well, to inform her of the Fannie “vision” and further destroy the reputation of her former employee. To Marian, who had worked so closely with Fannie, she wrote:

She [Fannie] becomes at times as verily possessed by demons as were human beings in the days of Christ. And when these paroxysms are upon her, many think she is inspired of God. She is fluent, her words come thick and fast, and she is under the control of demons.²¹⁴

To say that Ellen demonizes her young assistant is an understatement. The prophetess spares no attack on her character and soul. “Satan” has accomplished the “ruin of her soul,” and she has literally become “demon possessed” as the instrument of the evil one. Ellen unleashes these ad hominem character assassinations without a hint of introspection, self-doubt, self-reflection, or even the self-awareness that her own dishonesty and immoral behavior has put Fannie in this position. Hers is the sociopathic indifference of one who cares not for her victim but only for herself. But, how would you feel if the prophet and founder of your espoused religion were to condemn you and consign you to hell? It is fascinating to see that Fannie continued to give credence to the prophet’s claimed “visions” when she was intimately aware of Ellen’s writing methods and plagiarism. Fannie had such spiritual weakness and dependence on the prophetess that she was devastated by Ellen’s successful attacks, and was predictably brought to her knees. Once again, Fannie confessed that she had not fully died to self and begged Ellen for forgiveness.

I can see just how Satan has come and has always found something in me whereby he could work to harass and distress those with whom I was associated. Self has never died fully and therefore a door was left for the entrance of the enemy. The bottom of all my trouble has been self, and that is Satanic... In doing the work, I have looked at what was perplexing, and handling it day after day, have lost the real sense of its sacredness, and began to look upon it from a literary standpoint

alone. I don't know that it is quite just to put it in that way either; for I have had a sense of what it was to me, and to all, above that of a mere literary matter... My faith in the testimonies is stronger today than ever, and I feel that I want to put my whole influence on the side of upbuilding the faith of God's people in this great and sacred work.²¹⁵

For the time being, mission was accomplished. Ellen had succeeded in getting Fannie to detach her writings from literary laws and ethics, and to see them only in the artificial and fraudulent spiritual realm she had created. The next day she wrote Fannie back with a sudden change of heart. "I received and read your letter, and assure you that my heart is deeply touched by its contents. I accept your confession. As far as yourself and your connection with me personally is concerned, I have and do freely forgive you."²¹⁶ In spite of Ellen's previous invective and claims of demonization, Fannie was hired back immediately. Here again, we see Ellen's bizarre prophetic schizophrenia. Every time she vowed never to hire Fannie again, she reversed her course when Fannie capitulated to her agenda, which was all about controlling her assistant's tongue and making sure she didn't expose the prophet's plagiarism and fraud.

Some readers may be thinking, "But, Doctor, isn't it a good thing that Ellen was so willing to forgive and extend grace to Fannie?" The obvious answer is that the common denominator in Ellen's treatment of Fannie was her own self-interest. When Fannie was outside her employ, or exposing her methods to others while being employed, Ellen attacked her in the most vicious and extreme manner possible, demonizing her in every way. But the moment Fannie suggested she would return to work for Ellen under the prophet's terms, the prophetess became forgiving, gracious, and often effusive in her praise. If God had shown her that Fannie was her "adversary" and that she was under "the control of Satan," why would Ellen go back on her word that she would never hire her again, based on a letter? The clear answer is that the prophetess didn't get these messages from God, and that she was governed totally by her own self-interest in the way she treated Fannie. For she was ever aware, as she had acknowledged, that Fannie had the ability to hurt her like no one else.

How did Ellen's staff and inner circle react to Fannie being hired for the third time? First, they were used to Ellen's political twists and turns, for they had seen them repeatedly. Second, they knew the danger that Fannie represented with her knowledge of Ellen's literary methods, and the importance of keeping her quiet. Finally, Fannie was the most efficient, effective, and productive worker that Ellen had, and if she could be controlled, she was a huge asset to Ellen's team, as her own sons were quick to point out. In the words of Willie to his brother Edson, "She [Fannie] has remarkable talent and handles mother's matters very intelligently and rapidly, turning out more than twice as much work in a given time as any other editor mother has ever employed."²¹⁷ That doesn't exactly sound like a "demon possessed" person to me.

But bringing Fannie back again, after claiming she was demon possessed just four days before, would prove to be another serious mistake for Ellen. Her behavior seemed to mirror the movie *Groundhog Day*, for she kept reliving the same frustrations over and over. When camp meeting rolled around the next year, in 1895, once again, Fannie could not keep from telling the truth when asked about Ellen's literary practices. And Ellen was particularly furious that she was exposing her methods to influential church leaders like Dr. John Harvey Kellogg. Later, Kellogg would write Edward Ballenger about his conversations with Fannie and what she said about Ellen's violent reaction to her honesty. Fannie revealed that both she and Marian were told to go over the material plagiarized from the books of other writers "and transpose sentences and change paragraphs and otherwise endeavor to hide the piracy," and in response to Fannie's objections, "Ellen not only dismissed her, but slapped her face."²¹⁸

Ellen was embarrassed, humiliated, and exasperated by these revelations. She wrote that Fannie was "like a sheep bleating about the fold." Then she shot off a letter to Marian as soon as the camp meeting ended, informing her that she had fired Fannie again, claiming once more that she would never work with her in the future. Then she sent a follow-up letter three weeks later, affirming the same thing.

I have given nothing into Fannie's hands, and never expect to give her another chance to seek to betray me and turn traitor. I

have had enough of “talent” and “ability” to last me a lifetime...
I have served my time with Fannie Bolton.²¹⁹

Ironically, Ellen tried to turn the table on Fannie during this period by trying to accuse her of deception and dishonesty in a fascinating case of projection. Before she fired Fannie, a third time, for revealing her secrets, she had become quite annoyed with her assistant concerning her love life. In 1893, Ellen had hired a young man named W. F. Caldwell to help Fannie with her heavy load of typing. Caldwell had been separated from his wife and two children for three years before their divorce became official, but during this period, he began to show a romantic interest in Fannie. Ellen got wind of this and tried to nip this relationship in the bud, accusing Caldwell, in writing to his conference president, of having “a fondness for the society of young girls, and full of gaiety, conducting himself like a boy.”²²⁰

She also attempted to convince Fannie to back off this relationship by claiming that God had shown her (a favorite ploy) that He, the Almighty, had a real problem with Caldwell, as opposed to Ellen disliking him. She wrote:

The Lord has a controversy with Brother Caldwell. His love of self, his love of self-gratification, and his determination to have his own way, have made him unreasonable, overbearing, dictatorial. His practice of over-eating has taxed his digestive organs, distended his stomach, and taxed his nature to endure a burden that has reacted upon the brain, and his memory is weakened.²²¹

This doesn't make a lot of sense, because if Caldwell was “unreasonable, overbearing,” and “dictatorial,” if he was brain damaged and deficient in memory, why would Ellen continue to hire him? Her concern was that this romantic interest was distracting to Fannie's work production, and the last thing she wanted for Fannie was an intimate relationship, which would make it easier for her to confide in him about Ellen's dishonest practices. The prophetess comes across more like the town gossip than a prophet in this situation. She writes to Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, informing him that Fannie and Caldwell had formed “the attachment” of “love” and “had been pledged to one another” before the divorce was final.²²²

Fannie had initially denied that the relationship was serious when Ellen grilled her about it, probably, as a way of saying, “Mind your own business and stay out of my personal life.” But Ellen could tell that her workaholic assistant had fallen off in her productivity, so she continued to badger her, until Fannie confessed that she “loved Caldwell with all her heart,” and lamented that “three times has this cup of bliss [being engaged] been presented to me, and then been snatched away.” Now she feared that it was about to happen again, and Ellen was determined to be the snatcher. The prophet began to correspond with friends condemning Fannie for her dishonesty and bad judgment. The prophetess” wrote, “She [Fannie] stood before me in my tent, and declared that there was nothing to the reports. For one year after this, she was good for nothing to me, only a dead, heavy load.”²²³ Many who knew Fannie were concerned for her health, related to the guilt and anxiety she struggled with connected to Ellen’s plagiarism. Now, the prophetess saw an opportunity to blame Fannie for her own health problems, and to take the heat off from her dishonest practices. Ellen wrote Willard A. Colcord to pursue this very agenda.

It is practicing a course of secrecy and deception and wrongdoing. It is not the requirements made upon her, but it is kindling a fire and walking in the sparks of her own kindling in connection with her wonderful desire for another woman’s husband; lovesick sentimentalism.²²⁴

The prophetess would stop at nothing to ensure that her poor assistant’s relationship would not survive. She dug into the past, and began to attack Fannie’s previous romantic partner, a man named Blakley. Again, she wrote to Dr. John Harvey Kellogg that this Californian had put Fannie in such a state of mind while they were dating in Ann Arbor, Michigan, that she had nearly driven the whole staff into despair. Blakley affected her in such a negative way, according to Ellen, that she “acted at times as if possessed of an evil spirit, and she set in to make us all miserable...[and] was sometimes impudent and accusing.”²²⁵ In another letter to Colcord, Ellen insisted that when Blakley failed to write Fannie while she was in Australia, her assistant “almost blasphemed God.”²²⁶

So, Ellen overwhelms her poor subordinate with attacks which charge her with being guilty of “secrecy and deception,” having an “accusing,” “demonic” spirit, and “almost” blaspheming God. These are projections that boggle the mind when one considers how much secrecy and deception Ellen was practicing in her writing, how she continually used professed “visions” from God to accuse and condemn all who threatened her, and how she *literally* blasphemed God by her constant fraudulent claims which grossly misrepresented the Almighty. In any case, Ellen was successful in ending Fannie’s relationship, convincing her that she made poor choices with men, and ensuring that she would give up on future relationships with possible suitors.²²⁷

The prophet had been determined that she would either tame her nemesis and force her into silence, or that she would break her spirit and destroy her mental health. After things ended with Caldwell, Fannie’s health began to deteriorate, and it appeared once again that Ellen was finished with her. She may have assumed that Fannie was finally safe to fire for good this time, because her assistant was so broken by the way the prophetess had treated her. In the very apt words of Alice Elizabeth Gregg:

Impaling Fannie thus on her sharp pen, Ellen was able to divert attention from the copying problem to Fannie’s character. Nowhere in the record does Ellen say to Fannie, “Let’s give credit where credit is due. Let’s do the right thing.” The red herring assault on Fannie’s personality was the perfect tactic. This was to have been the end of Fannie’s term of service. Off and on, for a period of seven and a half years, Fannie had worked for Ellen. Now, the once “Christlike,” “brilliant,” “entertaining,” “talented,” “educated,” and “productive” Fannie had degenerated, according to Ellen’s recriminations, into a “poor, shallow soul,” a “flashing meteor,” a “practicer of deception,” a “lovesick sentimentalist,” a “pretentious actor,” a “poor, deluded, misshapen character,” and a “farce,” and said she had become “trying,” “provoking,” “one-sided,” “impulsive,” “fickle,” “unbalanced,” depressed,” “vacillating,” and “unself-controlled.”²²⁸

But Ellen was concerned that Fannie continued to talk about her plagiarism, and that she was getting a sympathetic hearing from some important people. So as absurd and ridiculous as it may seem, the prophetess decided to hire Fannie yet again, for the fourth time. Her rationale, for what seemed like a ludicrous decision to many, was her usual justification for what she did—God gave her a vision.

Ellen claimed that she had been told by an “unseen presence on March 20, 1895,” that Fannie was to be taken back into the work:

“If she [Fannie] separates now from you,” said the spirit, “Satan’s net is prepared for her feet. She is not in a condition to be left to herself now to be consumed of herself. She feels regret and remorse. I am her Redeemer, I will restore her if she will not exalt and honor and glorify herself. If she goes from you now, there is a chain of circumstances which will bring her into difficulties which will be her ruin.”²²⁹

Ellen was great at subjecting Fannie to pathological double binds. Either she was to blindly serve the prophetess and ignore the illegal and unethical plagiarism and fraud that she was expected to participate in, or she could separate from Ellen and fall into “Satan’s net” and experience “her ruin” and eternal damnation, based on the prophet’s visions. In reality, Ellen knew that Fannie could not stop talking about the prophet’s literary theft and her failure to properly recognize Fannie’s own work. But she continued to misrepresent and try to reframe Fannie’s concern as “self-exaltation” and “glorification.” Ellen shrewdly steered Fannie down a course that would ultimately lead to her final fall. By 1896, Fannie’s health was broken, largely because of what the prophet had put her through, so she left Ellen and returned to the United States. But both parties continued to speak out on their positions.

Reports came back to the prophetess that Fannie was still exposing her plagiarism and unethical literary practices to others. So, she reacted to these claims with a threatening and intimidating letter to Fannie, which included the words “I will cut off the influence of your tongue in every way I can,”²³⁰ and a few months later, she tried to discredit the insights of her former assistant in a letter to her friends, the Tennys. The prophet wrote, “Her

[Fannie's] imagination is very strong, and she makes such exaggerated statements that her words are not trustworthy."²³¹ There is no historical evidence that Fannie lied, distorted, or exaggerated her reports of Ellen's methods at all. The truth was so scandalous that she had no need to add to it. It was the truth that was so threatening to the prophetess, and it was the truth that she was determined to suppress, stifle, and discredit. Fannie, on the other hand, was consistent in the questions and complaints she had about Ellen's methods. Her inconsistency had to do with her weakness regarding the prophet's threats and attempts to hire and control her. Looking back, Fannie made it clear to Ellen that her position on plagiarism and literary fraud had never changed.

I thought as I have always thought before, that you did not see my perplexity, or comprehend my trouble, that it was your withholding of the truth about your writings in not acknowledging your editorial help, that was at the bottom of all the perplexity, and that your work was not as you say the work of God ought to be, "as open as sunlight."²³²

Not as "open as sunlight" doesn't begin to describe the levels of deception, plagiarism, and fraud that the prophet had engaged in and had a huge investment in hiding. The problem with both Marian and Fannie was that they were deeply confused and conflicted about Ellen's identity. She was their boss, and their church prophet, and yet, they both knew that she was avidly practicing plagiarism and misrepresenting her writings as being from God. Ultimately, this weighed too heavily on both women. Marian would die an early death connected to her anxiety and guilt for the part she played in publishing Ellen's plagiarism. And Fannie would have a mental breakdown and had to be institutionalized at the age of fifty-two, never to be the same again. Her health was broken, her mind was broken, and her spirit was broken, all by the prophet that she had trusted to save her.

It is interesting to note that Ellen lived to the ripe old age of eighty-seven, surrounded by a huge staff, great wealth, and a lavish lifestyle. Yet the prophetess had paradoxically expressed the concern that both Marian and Fannie would be the death of her. By contrast, Marian's health was broken in her fifties, and she died at the early age of fifty-seven. Her final

years were characterized by a great deal of regret, remorse, and guilt over the role she played with regard to Ellen's "terrible plagiarism." In fact, she was so upset by the accusations of plagiarism that she was "weeping herself to sleep night after night."²³³ Hers was an understandable guilt that any person with a conscience would experience, given that literary theft is a serious crime and immorality. Only a sociopath would dismiss such behavior. So, Marian confided in others about her guilt. This got back to Ellen, who was on a trip, and made several attempts to convince her through letters that she had nothing to feel guilty about.

Marian had quit eating, and was dramatically losing weight. Her guilt and anxiety were so great that she seemed to be completely impossible to comfort. In late August of 1904, Ellen wrote, "Let not one anxious thought come into your mind."²³⁴ But Marian continued to suffer. Three weeks later, the prophetess penned another "prescription" for her former bookmaker, assuring her that she had done nothing wrong or worthy of condemnation.

I am grieved that you are troubled in mind... He [the Lord] has no such feelings of condemnation as you imagine. I want you to stop thinking that the Lord does not love you... You need not think that you have done anything which would lead God to treat you with severity. I know better.²³⁵

However, again, Marian was not comforted by the words of one who was far guiltier than she was of the theft and fraud which had been committed. Finally, when Ellen returned to California from her trip in October, she tried to personally help Marian and get her to start eating again, only to fail a third time. Two weeks later, on October 25, Marian passed away at 4:00 p.m. She was fifty-seven years old and weighed only fifty-seven pounds. One account claimed that she died from tuberculosis, but her death certificate listed the cause as anemia. From our perspective today, it would be seen as a case of anorexia, for as one journalist/historian has suggested, "Starvation was the only way out of a situation that she could no longer tolerate."²³⁶

Fannie's demise was even more torturous and troubling than what Marian experienced. As her health declined, she had little strength to deal with the attacks of Ellen and her supporters. And yet, the attacks continued

because Fannie embodied by far the most serious threat to exposing Ellen's well-concealed secrets of plagiarism and fraud. In an attempt to make peace with her critics and enemies, Fannie issued the following statement in 1901 that brought Ellen and her followers great relief, and to which they latched on to as Fannie's official confession.

I thank God that He has kept Sister White from following my supposed superior wisdom and righteousness, and has kept her from acknowledging editors or authors; but has given to the people the unadulterated expression of God's mind. Had she done as I wished her to do, the gift would have been degraded to a common authorship, its importance lost, its authority undermined, and its blessing lost to the world.²³⁷

This letter is just another evidence of how confused and conflicted Fannie was based on the pressures and double binds she experienced. Now, she writes that it was God who kept Ellen from "acknowledging editors or authors" to whom she was indebted. God was the source of her plagiarism and fraud so that the Advent movement could grow and prosper. Little did Fannie know at that time how much of the "unadulterated expression of God's mind" that she attributed to Ellen's "visions" was totally false (in some cases ridiculous and racist) and a complete misrepresentation and distortion of God's truth. The confession was used by Ellen and her advocates as a much-needed way to dismiss and discredit Fannie. Fannie would later make statements that seemed to contradict the confession, but her detractors would cling to the confession as truth.²³⁸

Fannie was so conflicted and guilt ridden that not only was her physical health failing, but her mental health also began to seriously degenerate. At the age of fifty-two, her mental and emotional state had failed to the point where she was admitted into Kalamazoo State Hospital, and wasn't released until March 18, 1912, thirteen months after her admission. She was institutionalized there again twelve years later, just two years before her death. This was the final nail in her coffin, as far as her Adventist critics were concerned. They saw her illness as divine retribution for her accusations against the prophet, and also as an indication that she had always been a bit crazy and unbalanced. Fannie had been destroyed for

trying to tell the truth, and was shown no mercy or grace by the people who destroyed her.

It is very likely that Fannie would have lived a much happier, more fulfilled and successful life had she never become an Adventist. She was an extremely gifted, brilliant young woman who was already engaged in a great career, before she was drawn into the Advent movement and convinced that Ellen White was the great last-day prophet of God. Some Adventists have questioned why I would write such a book when Adventism has helped a lot of people, even if Ellen White was not who she claimed to be. But truth is truth, God can overcome evil with good, but that doesn't make the evil good. The truth is that many lives have been damaged and destroyed by Adventism, along with those that may have been helped. Fannie may be the best example of Ellen and her followers blaming the victims that she used and abused. It is little wonder that the White Estate withheld the release of the source documents that Fannie collected until 1982, for they reveal much about Ellen that we don't want to know.

Reorganization Wars

When it came to maintaining her prophetic status and political power in the Adventist movement, Ellen proved to be a master in multitasking. While she was fighting the battles with Marian and Fannie to keep her plagiarism from being exposed in the 1890s, she was also planning and plotting her strategy with A. G. Daniells to replace the current General Conference leadership, which had exiled her to Australia, and to totally reshape church organization. Those who would suggest that because Ellen was a prophet her motives were always pure and her testimonies and counsels were untainted by political pressures or concerns are simply ignorant of Adventist history. Again and again, we have seen how Ellen was politically and financially motivated to manipulate others for her own self-interest.

In fact, the historical evidence strongly indicates that rather than Ellen being a highly spiritual leader who transcended political motives, the opposite was actually true. In many ways Ellen was a political wolf in sheep's clothing. She used her forged and fraudulent spiritual image to accomplish her strong political goals, which she never could have achieved without her prophetic status. From an early age, Ellen was a very insecure

personality, but once she began to gain a following in Adventism at the age of seventeen and added James and Joseph Bates as her main support system, she became increasingly savvy about political considerations, and very skilled at using and manipulating them. We have repeatedly seen that in the chapters before this one, and will continue to see it in the chapters that remain.

Once Joseph Bates passed away in 1872, and her husband, James, died in 1881, Ellen was the only remaining founder left, but she had to constantly be on the lookout for political allies. This was particularly true after she was exposed in the public press as being a plagiarist, and after she was exiled to Australia by the General Conference leadership. An increasing number of leaders were looking to either marginalize or discredit the prophetess, for she was still the single most politically powerful person in the Advent movement. Ellen was very much aware of this dynamic, so one of the first important relationships she pursued after her husband's death was a close association with A. G. Daniells. He was initially an Iowa Conference evangelist who worked well with Ellen White in the temperance movement, before he started climbing up the Adventist hierarchy.

Their paths crossed often as Daniells moved up the ladder of church administration, but when Ellen was sent to Australia, he had recently become the head of the whole Australian field. From this point forward, their friendship would increase to the point where Ellen could refer to Daniells as her favorite son. At this stage of her ministry, Ellen had managed to alienate most of the pioneers or conservative leaders in Adventism, based on her positions and behaviors at the 1888 General Conference. She had also managed to alienate most of the so-called Pantheists or liberals in Adventist leadership, who had largely rejected her inspiration and openly acknowledged her plagiarism. Daniells was a progressive, who held a more liberal view of Ellen's inspiration and was aware of her plagiarism, but didn't bring these concerns up until after the prophetess was dead, for he clearly saw how he could benefit politically from the prophet's support.²³⁹

During their time together in Australia, they came up with a plan that would oust the current General Conference administration, revamp the entire organization of the church, and place Daniells at the helm of the new

ship as GC president, with the powerful support of the church's prophet at his back. When White and Daniells returned to America shortly before the 1901 General Conference, they acted remarkably like a team in preparing the church for the structural changes they envisioned. As the conference approached, Ellen called a large number of the more than two hundred delegates to meet with her informally in the Battle Creek College Library on the day before the GC formally opened. The group included all the most influential delegates attending the meetings, and on the appointed day, the seventy-three-year-old matriarch addressed this assembly for a full ninety minutes, laying out what she presented as God's direction for the new century. It just so happened that God's threefold agenda perfectly fit with the changes in the church that Ellen and Daniells so desperately wanted.

To introduce a new structure that would reorganize the church (and coincidentally, almost perfectly mirror the structure Ellen was raised with in the Methodist Church).

That all kingly power in the church was to disappear, there were to be "no kings" in the new system. (This was a direct slap at the old guard and current administration which had exiled her to Australia, and was now to be put out of office.)

To bring about a greater blending of the ministry with the medical missionary work, or to bring the medical work more under the control of the General Conference. [This represented a huge win for Daniells and Ellen, and a huge loss for Dr. John Harvey Kellogg.]²⁴⁰

For years, Kellogg had been able to lead the Adventist medical work, largely with the endorsement of the prophet who had declared that "physicians had responsibilities greater than those of ministers." But Kellogg was fully convinced that during their years in Australia, Daniells had taken every opportunity to bad-mouth him and to turn the prophetess against him, while convincing her that the ministry should oversee the medical work. Ellen's "visions" and testimonies once again made a U-turn, as God now showed her that "the highest of all work is ministry," and that "no work was more blessed of God than that of the gospel minister."²⁴¹ Kellogg not only disagreed with these statements, but also, he found them

contemptible, and his differences with the prophetess and her newly chosen GC president would only widen in the years ahead, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Questions

1. How was Ellen able to ultimately escape exposure when even the public press was running documented articles about her plagiarism?
2. Given the extremely high levels of plagiarism that we know occurred, who contributed more to her books, Ellen or Marian and Fannie?
3. What would you have done, faced with all the conflicts and moral dilemmas that Fannie Bolton faced?
4. Would Ellen White have been able to maintain her prophetic status in Adventism without the help of A. G. Daniells?



Dr. John Harvey Kellogg

Photo courtesy of Free Pictures J. H. Kellogg

CHAPTER 13

Dethroning King Kellogg

My Father's house is made a house of merchandise, a place where the divine presence and glory have departed!

—Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*

The story is told of a king from a Middle Eastern country who was known for his amazing crown jewels. The king was asked to bring his jewels for a world-famous display at a New York museum. The king agreed, but since he didn't speak English, he brought his most trusted translator and bodyguard to accompany him on the trip. The king didn't trust banks, so he hid his jewels in a place no one would ever guess in his luxurious penthouse in a fine city hotel. The morning he was scheduled to move the jewels, thieves barged into his suite disguised as hotel workers. They demanded that the king reveal the location of the jewels. But he swore through his translator that they were in another location. The thieves, with guns pointing at the king, screamed, "We know the jewels are here! Tell the king to tell his secret or we will shoot him now." After the translation, the white-faced king revealed the location of the jewels, which only he knew. The translator, shaking his head and weeping, turned to the robbers, and said, "His Majesty insists that he would rather die than reveal the location of his jewels."

If a king can't depend on his most trusted associate, he's in big trouble. Dr. John Harvey Kellogg was one of the only people in nineteenth-century Adventism who transcended the church and became as famous and well-known outside Adventism as he was in the denomination. Not only did Kellogg become the king of the Adventist medical work, but also, he became a household name outside of Adventism for a number of reasons and in a number of ways. Kellogg was a brilliant workaholic with wide-ranging interests which included being a famous medical doctor, nutritionist, health activist, successful businessman, and an inventor with numerous patents. He had every reason to believe that Ellen White would

be his greatest supporter, but ultimately, he was sadly mistaken. This chapter will look at the young Kellogg, the conquering Kellogg, the disillusioned Kellogg, the rejected Kellogg, and how they all were impacted by Ellen White.

Ellen and the Young Kellogg

As a young man, John Harvey Kellogg was almost like a son to Ellen and James White. He worked as an apprentice for four years under James, from whom he learned the printing and publishing business. He also did typesetting for Ellen's writings, while spending a good deal of time in the Whites' own home. John was born to John Preston Kellogg and his second wife, Ann Janette Stanley, on February 26, 1852. He was the fourth of eight living children born to his father and went to work for James White when he was only twelve years old. Kellogg's parents were converted to Adventism before his first birthday and, in line with the beliefs of the church, raised John Harvey to believe that time was too short for him to get much of a formal education. But Kellogg had a thirst for reading and, although self-taught to a great degree, developed a tremendous interest in the health reform literature that the Whites were publishing.

John Harvey was even closer to James than he was to Ellen, and given how competitive the Whites were in their marriage, as we have already noted, this may well have been a factor in the tensions that would eventually develop between Kellogg and the prophetess. Ellen may have been jealous and resentful of the time Kellogg spent with her husband, for she described the relationship James had with John as being closer than what her husband had with their own children.²⁴² But it is also safe to say that James and Ellen took John Harvey in as one of their own, and he developed an extremely close relationship with both of them. Even when things would eventually deteriorate between Ellen and Kellogg, long after James's death, the evidence will show that Kellogg extended much more grace and restraint toward the prophet than what she did to him.

Kellogg had a rigid personality, was extremely idealistic, and was strongly given to all-or-nothing thinking. If health reform was true, it should be followed to the letter of the law. And since he was convinced, initially, that the prophet was receiving "visions" from God, revealing these

things to be true, Kellogg tried to be all in when it came to observing the principles and practices of health reform. He was quite disturbed to see that the prophetess herself flagrantly disregarded vegetarianism and many of her other health reform teachings, even in her own home. But as his practice was, throughout his lifetime, he tried to extend Ellen as much grace as he possibly could, even when she terribly disappointed him.

When Kellogg finally had the opportunity to pursue more formal education in his teens, he initially hoped to become a teacher. But it was the Whites who persuaded him to enroll in a six-month medical course, in his early twenties, at Russell Trall's Hygieo-Therapeutic College in Florence Township, New Jersey. Their hope and goal was to raise up a group of trained doctors for the Adventist-inspired Western Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek. With the Whites' encouragement, John Harvey went on to graduate from the University Medical School in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the New York University Medical College at Bellevue Hospital in New York City. So, by 1875, he had a medical degree, and by October of 1876, Kellogg became director of the Western Health Reform Institute. Kellogg was a hard worker and highly motivated, so by the next year, he renamed it the Battle Creek Medical Surgical Sanitarium. He ingeniously coined the term "sanitarium" to suggest both hospital care and the importance of sanitation and personal health.

Kellogg would go on to become one of the most famous physicians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United States. His Battle Creek Sanitarium would attract many of the greatest celebrities and tycoons of the day, including guests like Henry Ford, John D. Rockefeller, Harvey Firestone, J. C. Penney, and C. W. Barron.²⁴³ Kellogg would lead the institution until his death in 1943, but his fame and success would inevitably bring him into conflicts with the prophetess of Adventism, and eventually turn her into his most difficult rival and opponent. Kellogg never wanted or welcomed this conflict and competition with the prophetess and, to his dying day, protected Ellen when he could have totally destroyed her, out of respect and love for the relationship they had known.

Ellen and the Conquering Kellogg

John Harvey Kellogg not only became an extremely well-known physician in the United States, but at the end of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century, he was also the most famous person, in general, that the Adventist Church would produce during this period. How did Kellogg achieve this distinction, and how was his rise to fame related to Ellen White, and ultimately opposed by Ellen White? These are the questions we will now explore. During his most amenable years, in his early teens, Kellogg became completely convinced about the validity of vital force physiology and other health reform theories that were popular in his day and were being given divine credibility in the Adventist Church, based on Ellen's visions. He would hold strongly to these views throughout his medical education, and use the status of his medical degree to give these theories greater acceptance than they had ever previously received.

Before Kellogg emerged as the authority on health, modesty, social purity, and sexuality, Ellen had occupied this role in Adventism, based on her "visions" from God. The reality was that she obtained and plagiarized her views from popular thought leaders in these fields, but then attributed them to God, which gave her tremendous influence in the Advent movement. Curiously, God quit giving her "visions" on these topics once Dr. Kellogg came into prominence. But in the 1860s and 1870s, Ellen wrote a great deal on these subjects. We have already explored some of her extreme and bizarre views about sex that were based on her belief in vital force physiology.²⁴⁴

However, some of the other things God showed her, in the areas of dress, modesty, and health, were equally strange from our perspective today. Her 1863 health reform "vision" was supposedly so comprehensive that it allowed her to address all these issues from God's perspective. Even though Ellen's own father had become a hat maker, the prophetess had now been shown, based on the science of phrenology, that hats, wigs, hairpieces, buns, and hair dyes were all dangerous potential sources of brain damage.

The artificial hair and pads covering the base of the brain, heat and excite the spinal nerves centering in the brain. The head should ever be kept cool. The heat caused by these artificials induces the blood to the brain. The action of the blood upon the lower or animal organs of the brain, causes unnatural activity,

tends to recklessness in morals and the mind and heart is in danger of being corrupted. As the animal organs are excited and strengthened, the morals are enfeebled. The moral and intellectual powers of the mind become servants of the animal... Many have lost their reason and become hopelessly insane, by following this deforming fashion.²⁴⁵

The prophetess was so certain that phrenology was a legitimate science that like William Miller, G. I. Butler, and many other prominent Adventists, she not only subjected herself, but also her family to phrenological examinations.²⁴⁶ Ellen's views were so much the product of Victorian American thinking and the health reformers of her day that she even embraced the popular notion that men could not resist any form of female immodesty. They were helpless "against the sophistry of Satan" and unprepared to "withstand his seductive arts." She laid the blame for sexual immorality squarely on women who had not properly prepared themselves to "repulse" every inappropriate male advancement in any given situation.

If our sisters would feel the necessity of purifying their thoughts, and never suffer themselves to be careless in their deportment, which leads to improper acts, they would not be in danger of staining their purity. They would feel such an abhorrence of impure acts and deeds that they would not be found among the number who fall through the temptations of Satan, no matter who the medium might be whom Satan should select.²⁴⁷

Many of the dictates that grew out of Ellen's health reform "vision" mixed her concern for health and modesty or purity together. For example, women were not to wear vain "breast paddings" or padded bras "to give the appearance of well-developed breasts," because "these appendages attract the blood to the chest obstructing the natural circulation and making healthy development impossible."²⁴⁸ Every form of perfume, cosmetic, and jewelry was also condemned by the prophetess. But it was her health reform dress from which Ellen benefitted a great deal financially (as noted earlier) where many Adventist women finally drew the line. Here again, her attempts to

integrate her concerns for modesty and health led to fashion that most Adventist women found to be ugly and unacceptable.

In this case, there was such a refusal to comply that by 1875, Ellen was forced to give up her campaign to institute the reform dress when it became obvious that pursuing it would threaten her prophetic position. But for the most part, Adventist women did try to observe the other forms of modesty and simplicity that the prophetess insisted God had shown her in vision. In comparing Kellogg's views of women and social purity to those of Ellen White, there were both differences and similarities that are quite striking. The doctor subscribed to the same vital force theories that led to most of Ellen's health conclusions, but he differed strongly with the prophetess when it came to his intense dislike for her health reform dress, and her tendency to put the blame on women for the lack of social purity in society.

The doctor never supported Ellen's reform dress, feeling it placed an undo and unnecessary burden on females, until the prophetess was finally forced to abandon it based on the noncompliance of Adventist women. In 1892, he also wrote a book entitled *Social Purity*, in which he attempted to argue, in many ways, that women should experience equal rights with men²⁴⁹ (an idea far ahead of its time). Kellogg wanted men to be held accountable for the lack of social purity to the same degree as women, in contrast to Ellen White and Victorian American culture in general, which largely put the blame on women. He was very vocal in his criticisms of men who degraded women in any way, including taking advantage of them sexually, but what this meant to Kellogg is quite fascinating because his views on sex were even more extreme than Ellen's.

Many decades ago, Hugh Hefner published a fifteen-page article on the sexual ideas of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg. And while I don't typically quote Hefner as a source on anything when it came to the historical documents that Hefner had to choose from, one can hardly blame him for concluding that the "good doctor" was totally "anti-sex" like the sick puritanical society he represented.²⁵⁰ Both Puritan and Victorian thinking about human sexuality in America is largely misunderstood and mischaracterized. The Puritans actually had a much healthier view of sexuality than they are generally given credit for. They were just intensely private about sex. Victorian America, by contrast, was famous for its repressive and unhealthy views of human sexuality. But both Kellogg and Ellen White held extreme

ideas about sex that went way beyond the common thinking of even their day.

What is even more striking is the absolute dogmatism that they each expressed on this subject, while claiming different sources of authority. Ellen appealed to her visions, and Kellogg boasted that his expertise represented the “latest scientific knowledge.”²⁵¹ But they were both the products of a Victorian culture which held too many naive and badly flawed views of human physiology and sexuality. These included theories related to vitalism (vital force), and phrenology which both played a major role in their thinking and writing, although the doctor was much more sophisticated in how he elaborated on these theories.

In practice, they both laid ridiculous pressures and the most unrealistic guilt-producing expectations on young people and their parents during this era.

Both Ellen and Kellogg embraced a worldview that was highly reductionistic and fear based, which led them as leaders to write dictates that were extremely controlling. They both helped to generate the masturbation phobia that was surprisingly widespread during this period, through their claims that this activity caused nearly every form of serious disease and premature death. It was to be avoided at all costs, including restraining children from touching themselves at night by “bandaging the parts,” tying the hands,” “covering the organs with a cage,” to prevent this “vicious and pernicious habit.” Both the doctor and the prophet used the strongest language possible to denounce this “demonic” practice.

Moreover, even the most innocent activities were condemned, because they were thought to stimulate sexual thoughts and to accelerate the onset of puberty, which were both believed to be very harmful. Kellogg called for “unblemished purity” on the part of both males and females and strongly promoted “purity pledges” that not only promised to reject all activities that could generate sexual thoughts, but also to avoid all such thoughts themselves. He recommended keeping the sexes apart until they were ready for marriage. He condemned dancing, theater attendance, novel reading, indecent public art that contained immodesty, parties, balls, competition in school, and city living in general that was thought to stimulate the senses in dangerous ways.²⁵²

Not to be outdone, Ellen had “visions” which also condemned these same things, but went beyond Kellogg to write against makeup, cosmetics, perfume, phonograph, roller-skating, unchaperoned dating, bowling, bonnet wearing, fair attendance, circus attendance, ice-skating, etc., as dangerous activities that stimulated sexual thoughts and animal propensities.²⁵³ Anything or any activity that served to possibly provoke sensual cognitions was believed to deplete vital force and therefore threaten life and health. The primary areas where Kellogg was even more extreme than the prophetess were threefold.

First, his insistence that male adolescents should be stripped of all sexual thoughts and take pledges to that effect. For Kellogg, “daydreams” and “mental unchastity” were just as harmful as the worst “concupiscence,” leading to “debility and effeminacy” and reducing a person to the level of the “veriest debauchee.” Yet, in spite of his attempt to remove this “false double standard” between males and females, he still focused on female immodesty as the primary cause of degenerating morality.²⁵⁴

Second, Kellogg went beyond the extreme beliefs of Ellen White about health and sexuality by making medical assertions and assumptions that, from our perspective today, are humorous and outrageous. The doctor had an obsession with the value of enemas, using them constantly on his patients (depicted in the movie *The Road to Wellville*) and described “constipation” as a major source of “sexual excitement.”²⁵⁵ This was not the only strange connection Kellogg made between sex and medicine. The doctor deplored and denounced the American practices of dating, flirtation, and courtship that were common in his day, believing that sensual thoughts about the opposite sex were a “leprosy” and “pestilence” to be avoided at all costs.²⁵⁶ His reasoning was that they led to premature puberty and then to the depletion of vital force. He considered the early onset of puberty to be extremely harmful for males and females, but especially for girls.

Females in whom puberty occurs at the age of ten or twelve, by the time their age is doubled, are shriveled and wrinkled with age. At the time when they should be in their prime of health and beauty, they are prematurely old and broken. Those women who mature late, retain their beauty and their strength many

years after their precocious sisters have become old, decrepit, and broken down.²⁵⁷

Finally, Kellogg's most extreme view, based on what he claimed to be "medical science," was his insistence that even marital sex was for the purpose of procreation alone. The doctor warned that even after marriage "sexual interests" and "desires" were a "form of depravity inspired by Satan." And even reproductive sex was much prescribed. It was to occur "on or about the 14th day" of the woman's twenty-eight-day cycle, which the doctor believed was the only time that "desire for sexual congress naturally exists in the female." To otherwise violate nature's laws by indulging beyond this was not only considered to be "bestly," but also led to what Kellogg called legalized murder. He believed that the female body and bone structure was not equipped to handle sexual activity beyond the purposes of reproduction.²⁵⁸

Furthermore, the doctor emphasized the importance of detecting pregnancy as soon as possible, because sexual intercourse during pregnancy was harmful. Kellogg considered sex during menstruation to be "unthinkably loathsome and a heinous violation of nature's laws." He also placed very strict age limits on the act of reproductive sex, given his belief that bone development was inadequate in women to have sex before the age of twenty and in men before the age of twenty-four. This was at a time when young marriage was very common. And sex after the age of forty-five or after menopause was also believed to be very destructive for women. Kellogg insisted that the "reproductive act" was the "most exhaustive of all vital acts." Its effect was to "retard, weaken," and "dwarf the intellect" in both men and women. But it was "even worse" for females, "the weaker gender," increasing the chances they would pass on the damage to their progeny, who were more likely then to be born as "dwarfs, cretins, monsters or mongolian idiots." He never lacked for certainty in these beliefs.

Physiology fixes with accuracy the earliest period at which marriage is admissible. This period is that at which the body attains complete development, which is not before 20 in the female and 24 in the male. Even though the growth may be

completed before these ages, ossification of the bones is not fully effected, so that development is incomplete.²⁵⁹

“Sex for anything but reproduction” would have devastating and tragic consequences, according to Kellogg. He advocated the value of sexual abstinence all his life, and practiced what he preached. In contrast to Ellen who freely violated many of her own visionary mandates, the doctor generally lived by his own prescriptions, and considered hypocrisy to be despicable. For this reason, the historical evidence available strongly suggests that Kellogg never consummated his marriage.²⁶⁰ He wedded Ella Eaton four days before his twenty-seventh birthday, and the couple never had any biological children. They maintained separate bedrooms throughout their life together. They did have forty-two foster kids and adopted seven of them. Kellogg, too, would make a fascinating subject for a psychobiography. Just as his contemporary Freud had an obsession with sex, and saw it as the deepest root of human drives and motivations, John Harvey also had a preoccupation with sex, but in the context of a phobia based on a false reliance on assumed “scientific facts.”²⁶¹

It is safe to say that both Kellogg and Ellen White were the products of nineteenth-century Victorian thinking and that many of their views on sex and Christian standards were ridiculously bizarre and totally outrageous based on what we know today. The difference between their views had everything to do with authority. Kellogg claimed medical and scientific authority for his positions, and as many of the theories he espoused like vital force physiology were discredited, Kellogg changed some of his ideas and went virtually silent on the subject of sex after 1920. Ellen, on the other hand, attributed her source of authority to “visions” from God. Therefore, she could not repudiate what she had written, and the Adventist Church continued to practice and teach many of her outdated and harmful views long after her death.

Just to give the reader a few examples of this from my own life, when I was a kid, one of my best friends happened to be the minister’s son. But he was never allowed to stay over at our house, or participate in any overnight activities with anyone in our group of friends, because his parents were hard-core followers of Mrs. White’s writings, and she had warned against such “polluting practices.”

To save my children from being corrupted I have not allowed them to sleep in the same bed, or in the same room, with other boys, and have, as occasion has required when traveling, made a scanty bed upon the floor for them, rather than have them lodge with others.²⁶²

My friend, and so many other Adventist kids, missed out on a lot of wholesome activities because of this kind of paranoia. But this is mild compared to what I was exposed to while attending an Adventist boarding school on the West Coast during my junior and senior years of high school. Our main Bible teacher insisted that there was to be no dating except chaperoned dating before marriage, and that all kissing and hugging and hand-holding was forbidden before marriage as well, based on his unending supply of Ellen White quotes, which we were required to memorize instead of the Bible. Our dormitory dean was even worse. He called me into his office, shortly after my arrival on the campus, and said, “Did I see you playing tennis without a shirt on today?” “Yes,” I confessed, “it was extremely hot, and I didn’t know it was a problem.”

“Don’t you know how much it sexually arouses women when they see a man with his shirt off?” There had been no women present, and at first, I was certain he must be joking, but he grabbed one of Ellen’s red books, beat it together in his hand, and sternly said, “Don’t ever let it happen again!” The females on campus were told they were never to wear sandals around males, because men were sexually aroused by seeing women’s toes. So, there was no mixed swimming, no hand-holding, and chapel seats were assigned to prevent male and female couples from sitting together. But this was nothing compared to what was coming. The dean asked me to work for him as a resident assistant after I was elected to become boys club president for my senior year. I wasn’t thrilled at the prospect, but the pay and perks were good, so I accepted. It was a mistake.

This dean was an Ellen White fanatic, and told the five of us who were RAs that when we did room check at night we were to look for any suspicious activity, especially anything that looked like it could be connected with masturbation. We were even to make a note about any student who slept on his stomach, for this was thought to be the position of the “self-abuser.” We always walked out of his office shaking our heads. It

was quite a school. It carefully attempted to follow the God-given dictates of the prophet, so it forbade every form of healthy sexual interaction, and then condemned every attempt to privately release sexual repression and frustration. But if the prophet was right, and received these “visions” from God, these faculty and staff were simply trying to save us from every form of disease, self-destruction, and premature death. The good news is that when we have our class reunions every five years, there is never a shortage of things to laugh about. But this is the kind of weird subculture (cult) you get when a prophet steals her teachings from others and then attributes them to God.

Kellogg and Ellen shared the common fault of subscribing to a vital force physiology and some other Victorian views, which led them to the most bizarre beliefs and teachings, but at their core, they were extremely different people and in many ways were opposites. Kellogg, in spite of his weird ideas, had a brilliant creative mind. He was a strongly self-disciplined workaholic who wrote more than fifty books (which he actually authored), many of them best sellers in his day. The doctor became extremely popular, not only in Adventism, but also in American culture in general. In contrast to Ellen, he was a very secure and self-confident human being (maybe too confident, given his dogmatism). He was a man of impeccable integrity, who followed Ellen White’s dictates far more carefully than the prophetess herself, and while he deplored all forms of fraud, dishonesty, plagiarism, greed, and financial exploitation, he still managed to show Ellen much more grace and respect than she did to him. But what led to the rift and ultimate war between Kellogg and the prophet, and how did she ultimately dethrone him in Adventism? These are the questions we will explore in the remainder of this chapter.

Ellen and the Disillusioned Kellogg

Just as James and Ellen experienced repeated failures trying to keep a school open when they attempted to start the Adventist educational work, they suffered a similar fate with their health reform institute. It was Goodloe Harper Bell and Sidney Brownsberger who rescued and saved the SDA educational work, only to have Ellen turn on them with her “visions” and criticisms, and a similar situation would unfold with regard to the

health work. In 1876, the Western Health Reform Institute, founded ten years earlier as a brainchild of the Whites, had only twenty patients and was getting ready to close its doors. Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, fresh out of medical school, not only rescued the institute, but also changed its name and built it into one of the most famous health spas in the world.

Despite his idiosyncrasies and numerous strange views that are well-documented, Kellogg became a household name in America for many reasons. Not only was he a best-selling author of numerous books, but also, he was a highly successful surgeon who performed some 22,000 operations during his lifetime, including 165 successful major abdominal surgeries without a fatality. Moreover, Kellogg invented such common household items as cornflakes and peanut butter, as well as a revolutionary way to process it. He also patented and invented many other medical and health-related articles. But he was most famous and best known for building and leading the Battle Creek Sanitarium, which was a favorite health spa and treatment center, and was attended by celebrities from all over the world. Kellogg's fame became an increasing sore spot for Ellen who always turned on Adventists who became more prominent or famous than herself. She was insecure (for good reason—she had a lot to hide), was very possessive of Adventism, and was given to jealousy. Dr. Kellogg became a rival because he surpassed the prophet in fame and accomplishment, threatened her sense of entitlement, and was not easily led or manipulated. So, their conflicts would grow in four major areas.

When Kellogg was first rescuing the Adventist health work, Ellen was very supportive and wrote about how God had shown her that physicians occupied the highest work on earth. They were described with superlatives that surpassed every other profession. It was revealed to the prophetess that the “highest trust ever committed to man is given to physicians.”²⁶³ She was also shown that physicians had a commission, as well as responsibilities, that were “greater than ministers.”²⁶⁴ These visionary revelations made good sense to Kellogg, who had no lack of ego, and who had an extreme disdain for SDA ministers whom he dismissed as “uneducated, ignorant, second-rate individuals.” And this was no isolated comment, because after Kellogg gained prominence, those who knew him observed that he “ran down the ministry in every way he could.”²⁶⁵

The doctor held Adventist ministers in such total contempt for three main reasons. He considered their education to be very poor and sectarian at best, and many operated without any college degrees at all. He found SDA theology to be hostile to the world, culture, and churches he was trying to reach with his health message, breeding isolation from and condemnation of non-Adventists. He also questioned traditional SDA teachings on the Sabbath as the seal of God, remnant theology, Sunday worship and the mark of beast, etc.²⁶⁶ And most of all, Kellogg despised the hypocrisy he saw in the ministry, especially the general failure of most SDA clergy to observe the health principles Ellen had received in “visions” and which he held so dear. The doctor became even more outspoken in his attacks on ministers after Ellen and A. G. Daniells partnered up in Australia. Kellogg greatly disliked Daniells because he believed he was filling Ellen’s head with lies about him while they were down under and that the prophet was favoring the ministry above the medical work because of Daniells. Kellogg’s continuing criticisms of the ministry drew the ire of Ellen, and generated rebukes from the prophet.

She changed her tune about medicine being the highest calling because now God was repeatedly “showing” her that “the highest of all work is ministry.”²⁶⁷ She insisted “that there is no work more blessed of God than that of the gospel minister.” And putting Kellogg in his place, she wrote, “There must be no belittling of the gospel ministry.” Nothing “should be conducted as to cause the ministry of the word to be looked upon as an inferior matter. It is not so.” Furthermore, she warned against Kellogg’s practice of encouraging young men to go into medicine instead of the ministry. “Those who belittle the ministry are belittling Christ... Some have been encouraged to take a course of study in medical lines who ought to be preparing themselves to enter the ministry.”²⁶⁸ But Kellogg was becoming increasingly convinced that her testimonies were not necessarily coming from God.

One of the reasons that Kellogg began to lose confidence in the “visions” and the testimonies of the prophetess was that he had firsthand knowledge of her plagiarism. The first book that Ellen White wrote on the subject of health was a small volume entitled *How to Live*, published shortly after her comprehensive health reform “vision” of 1863. She was supposedly shown so much in this “vision” that she would be writing about it for years.

But the facts are that nearly every concept she shared in her numerous books on health that followed can be traced directly to plagiarized ideas she took from various health reform authors of her day without any acknowledgment or attribution being given.²⁶⁹ Adventist Church members were taught that any similarities found between Ellen's writings and other authors were simply the product of God giving the same ideas to different people at different times, but the prophetess was given these thoughts in visions, so they were divinely inspired. In the case of *How to Live*, the book was partially a theft from L. B. Coles's *Philosophy of Health*.

Dr. Kress, who was an Adventist physician who knew Kellogg as an associate and friend, had run across Cole's book in Detroit and purchased it about ten years before Ellen's *How to Live* was published. When comparing the two volumes, Kress was astonished to see the remarkable similarities between the books. But being a naive and brainwashed Adventist, he assumed that God had shown these concepts to Ellen in vision, independent of any knowledge about Coles or his works. So, he commented on this to Kellogg, who did his best to give Kress a firsthand account of what had actually happened. The conversation transpired as follows.²⁷⁰

Kress: I have discovered a book here that reads just like *How to Live*. Such a wonderful thing that the Lord should put this into two minds at different times, but the curious thing about it is that this book was written before *How to Live* was written.

Kellogg: Dr. Kress, I know all about that. I have got the book in my library. It is Cole's *Philosophy of Health*, isn't it?

Kress: Yes.

Kellogg: Now, I know all about it. His book was in my library, and Sister White had access to it when *How to Live* was written, and that is the explanation of that. There is no miracle about that.

Again and again, we see Ellen misleading her readers or, more accurately, straight out lying to her followers, claiming that she wrote what she wrote under the direct inspiration of God and that she was not aware of similarities in other articles or books before writing out her own visions. Then, after her works were published, she would concede that she was

made aware of similar writings by others. Here, we see that same familiar pattern unfold. In 1868, after *How to Live* had been published, Ellen now gives the impression that she has come upon an excellent book by Coles that seemed to harmonize with many of the truths that God had shown her. In the April 14, 1868, issue of the *Review and Herald*, Ellen recommends L. B. Coles's book *Philosophy of Health* as an "excellent work," without letting the reader know that she had relied on this book to a great degree in plagiarizing Coles when she wrote *How to Live*. Again, it is not my purpose in this volume to present the laborious comparisons of her plagiarisms, but they are available and, in this case, can be found on the Internet.²⁷¹

A second factor that strongly contributed to Kellogg losing his faith in Ellen's testimonies and "visions" was the financial fraud and dishonesty of which he knew the Whites were guilty, and the prophet's attempt to cover up and justify this behavior through visions. Kellogg knew D. M. Canright, the famous Adventist preacher, well, because he, too, lived with the Whites and had a close relationship with them for many years before he left Adventism in 1887 and went on to write books denouncing both Adventism and Ellen White.²⁷² Canright and Kellogg not only both left Adventism, but also, both expressed major concerns about the Whites' financial mismanagement and fraud. A classic example of how James and Ellen teamed together to make money at the expense of church members is described in Canright's *Life of Ellen White*.

Take an example of how she used her revelations to make money: In 1868, Elder White had on hand several thousand dollars' worth of old books which were dead property, as they were not selling, and were going out of date. He hit on a plan to raise a "book fund" for the free distribution of books and tracts. This fund he used to buy out his and his wife's old books. When the money did not come fast enough, she had a revelation about it thus:

"Why do not our brethren send in their pledges on the book and tract fund more liberally? And why do not our ministers take hold of this work in earnest?... We shall not hold our peace upon this subject. Our people will come up to the work. The means will come. And we would say to those who are poor and want

books, send in your orders... We will send you a package containing four volumes of 'Spiritual Gifts,' 'How to Live,' 'Appeal to Youth,' 'Appeal to Mothers,' 'Sabbath Readings,' and two large charts, with key of explanation, and charge the fund four dollars" (*Testimonies*, Vol. I, p. 689).

Every one of these books was their own. The money came, and they pocketed it all. I was there, and know.

There was no end to the financial angles and manipulations the Whites were able to employ when they held the power of leadership as well as the divine trump card—visions—whenever they were needed. Kellogg, too, was well aware of this particular fraud conducted by the Whites, as described by Canright, but he would experience much worse, on a scale that dwarfed the many other financial scams the Whites employed. For a more detailed look at these schemes and scams, see Dr. Jack Gent's excellent work *The Desirer of Wages*,²⁷³ a play on words referring to Ellen White's book *The Desire of Ages*, which was also plagiarized from several different authors. But what Kellogg would encounter from the Whites toward the end of James's life would qualify as grand larceny.

The SDA Church has never published the details of this scheme, for obvious reasons, but a detailed and documented account has thankfully been historically preserved, thanks to Dr. Kellogg. It was in the year 1907 when Ellen White and Adventist leaders were attempting to have Kellogg disfellowshipped from the church, and to take as much of the health work away from him as they were able, that the official transcript was recorded. Two church leaders, Elder A. C. Bordeau and George W. Amadon, were appointed to contact Kellogg to interview him as the first part of a process that was designed to remove him from the Adventist Church. Kellogg was well aware of what was going on and only agreed to meet on the condition that a professional stenographer would be present to record the meeting and provide an official transcript signed by all participants that would prevent distortion or misrepresentation of what was said.

Dr. Kellogg had an impeccable reputation for honesty and integrity, and he had built the Battle Creek Sanitarium to its current level of success and maintained control over its financial matters and how funds were disbursed. So, he had firsthand knowledge of how James and Ellen White had

attempted to rip off the sanitarium financially, and this was the subject of a section of the interview entitled "The \$5,000." Again, it is important to remember that \$5,000 at this time was worth at least \$150,000 and possibly as much as \$250,000 in today's US currency, so this was no small amount of money. But the interview was very revealing in terms of what it exposed about how James and Ellen operated with regard to financial fraud, and how the church was forced to admit their culpability in this matter.

Dr. Kellogg: The Elder (James White) had a dealing with the Sanitarium by which he got possession of five thousand dollars that did not belong to him. He told them if they did not let him keep it he would throw up the sponge, withdraw his influence from the Sanitarium. So the Elder kept the money.

About the time we started the new building the Elder got sick. He had a stroke, went down to South Lancaster, stopped with Elder Haskell, and sent me a check for five thousand dollars. He told me he had intended to pay the money back, that he had always intended to pay it back, that he had told the members of the Board so, told Drusilla Lamson, Mrs. Hall, and others. They all knew he had intended to pay the money back.

Dr. Kellogg: But he got well, came around and demanded it back. I headed him off for a while, but finally he came out and demanded it. I told him it belonged to the Sanitarium, that he knew it and I knew it. Then he went right at it to down me. When it came to the election, I told the nominating committee they could leave him off or leave me off. I would not serve on the Board with him. He had been using his influence against the institution, telling people all over the country the institution was going bankrupt and they should withdraw their money. I would not serve if he was on the Board, so they left him off.

An arbitrating committee came to me and said, "We have talked with Sister White, and she says she has seen that you should pay that money back to the Elder."

I said, "She never saw it."

"Oh," said Elder Butler, "do you mean to say that you know better than Sister White what she has seen?"

I said, "I can prove to you that the Lord never showed her any such thing."

"Well, you have a big task, it seems to me, for a little doctor." And I proved it to him.

But there it was. Sister White had said the Lord had said we should pay that back. The Sanitarium Board hedged, but because Sister White said she had seen it of the Lord, they thought they should pay the money back. But I took my stand against it.

However, the next morning I went to the bank, got the check and paid that money back to the Elder when I knew he ought not to get it. "The Lord had said it." I could not stand up against that. But I let them know how I felt about it.

Here we see again that the Whites were accustomed to taking advantage of their position and influence for their own financial benefit. But in this case it was on a very large scale (\$5,000/\$150,000 today), and Ellen was willing, as usual, to claim to have a "vision" in the hope of settling a crisis. However, in this instance, Dr. Kellogg had the proof and evidence to show that the "vision" was not valid. The interview goes on to show that not only did the Whites obtain this \$5,000 illegitimately, but also that James desperately needed the money to pay back another entity from which he had illegitimately obtained the same amount, another \$5,000. The Whites had been using these huge amounts for their own personal benefit for years at the expense of the church, without any accountability. The interview continues.

Dr. Kellogg: The Elder took the money, paid it into the Review and Herald to settle up old scores when he had taken more profits than he ought to have had on his books.

Then he got up a special supplement of the Review, saying he admitted he had had more of the profits than he ought to have had, and he was making it right by paying the Review and Herald office five thousand dollars.

The five thousand dollars he had stolen from us went to pay back five thousand dollars he had stolen from the Review and Herald.

Now I waited. In the meantime, the Elder died (August, 1881). He would not have done such crazy things if he had been sound. I told W. C. White, S. N. Haskell, and H. W. Kellogg that the five thousand dollars had been gotten by wrong doing, and I was going to have it back.

H. W. (Kellogg) shook his fist in my face and said, “You’ll never get a dollar of it.”

I said, “I will have every penny of it.”

I said to W. C. White, “If the money isn’t paid back, I shall stand up before the next General Conference and tell the entire story from beginning to end.” I said, “It will be a hard thing to do now that your father is dead, but I will do it.”

They had a business session at the Review and Herald office. I happened to be down there in the counting room, and H. W. (Kellogg) walked in and said, “Here is a check for you.” He handed me it, a check for five thousand dollars.

He said, “I want you to understand I don’t do this of my own free will, but because I am instructed to do it by the Board.”

“I suppose you (Amadon) were one of the men that told him to do it.”

Amadon: I don’t think I was on the Board then.

Dr. Kellogg: Perhaps you were not, but you knew about it.

Amadon: Oh, yes, I knew about it.

Dr. Kellogg: I took that five thousand dollars, stood against crookedness and won. Now, this is the point: I took my stand square against Elder White and Sister White and the Testimonies, and the whole General Conference Committee, and they gave me the five thousand dollars because they didn’t dare face the truth. Sister White knew from that time on it wasn’t any use sending me Testimonies that were not square, that I would not submit and say, “The Lord says it.”²⁷⁴

Kellogg became increasingly unwilling to believe, or to allow himself to be manipulated by, Ellen White’s visions. There were many occasions when Kellogg could have destroyed Ellen White and openly exposed her fraud based on his firsthand knowledge, but because she had been like a mother

to him, he refused to do this, even after she totally betrayed him. But Kellogg did become quite disturbed when Ellen claimed to have “visions” showing her specific actions he had supposedly taken that never occurred, especially when these incidents were being used by church leaders as a basis to condemn him and remove him from the church. Flagrant examples of this caused some of Kellogg’s physician colleagues to openly oppose and take on the prophetess in ways that she was not accustomed to facing.

Ellen and the Rejected Kellogg

Of the bright lights who left Adventism, or were expelled from it, John Harvey Kellogg was by far the most famous and by far the closest to Ellen as far as a personal relationship was concerned. Even after he was disfellowshipped from the church, and betrayed by the prophetess, the doctor exercised extreme restraint in his willingness to criticize the aging matriarch. Although he did come to largely dismiss her visions, it was his pattern to blame those who surrounded the prophet for the unfair attacks she leveled against him. The same cannot be said for Ellen in terms of the extreme charges and accusations she made against the doctor, claiming that they were revealed to her by God in vision. Her concern that Kellogg was not falling into line as she wanted, and might undermine confidence in her testimonies, led her to write that she had been shown that he was in league with the devil.

I have seen how Dr. Kellogg has united with the arch deceiver in using a hypnotic influence upon souls to deceive them... If Dr. Kellogg can destroy the faith of any of our people in the testimonies, he will do it. He sometimes takes the nurses and others alone in the night season, and talks with them for hours, framing a tissue of falsehood, to make them believe himself as a much abused man... The Doctor will take advantage in every way to make an impression upon human minds in destroying confidence in the testimonies.²⁷⁵

Ironically, Kellogg refused to denounce her testimonies even though he had firsthand evidence that they were clearly wrong. If it wasn’t enough to accuse the doctor of being under demonic influence, Ellen also made the

ridiculous charge that Kellogg was teaching “doctrines of free love” (when in reality he taught sexual abstinence). This accusation led other church leaders to claim that Kellogg was “sexually seducing nurses” and “turning the Sanitarium into a brothel.” Ellen also charged Kellogg of being a “pantheist” and that his new book *The Living Temple* was the “alpha of deadly heresies.” All accusations the doctor totally denied and considered to be ludicrous. These rumors enraged Kellogg and clearly convinced him that Ellen wasn’t getting her information from God, but from his enemies in church administration.²⁷⁶

In a letter to former GC president Butler, Kellogg maintained that her false statements had not destroyed his faith in her previous life work and gifts, but that he was concerned that those who had not known her for years and were seeing these outrageous false accusations were finding it impossible to “maintain any considerable degree of confidence in her work.”²⁷⁷ What Kellogg was not fully aware of was the degree to which Ellen had plagiarized her entire life, and applied the same methods she was using against him to others. What makes Kellogg’s case unique is that he had a lot of support from those who knew him and there was absolute evidence, documentation, and proof that Ellen was issuing testimonies against him, which she attributed to God, but were actually based on false information given to her by church leaders who were threatened by Kellogg and were willing to do almost anything to hurt him. The following six cases were some of the most prominent examples of this practice.

1. *The Accusation of Forgery*: A. G. Daniells had convinced Ellen that Kellogg had forged a note illegally. The prophetess then had a “vision” and issued a testimony to this effect. Daniells obtained a copy of the testimony and used it as proof from God that Kellogg was a criminal. Kellogg proved that the accusation was totally false and based on a misunderstanding and a mistake that had nothing to do with forgery. Judge Arthur informed Daniells that he was mistaken and was guilty of wrongly accusing Kellogg, but Daniells continued to use the testimony from the prophet to condemn Kellogg, even though he knew it was wrong.²⁷⁸

2. *The Union College Bakery*: Kellogg received a testimony from Ellen White accusing him of robbing Union College of its bakery, based on what God had shown her, so that he could use the bakery for his nearby sanitarium, which he was helping to build. But Kellogg produced a written contractual agreement which vindicated him of any wrongdoing in this case, and proved the testimony to be totally false.²⁷⁹
3. *The Chicago Building Testimony*: Ellen White was given a mistaken newspaper article which claimed that Kellogg had misused funds to erect buildings in Chicago. Again, without contacting the doctor and asking him about it, Ellen had a “vision” and wrote a testimony condemning Kellogg for these actions. In actuality, the buildings had never been built, and the testimony was exposed as being invalid and false.²⁸⁰
4. *The A. R. Henry Libel Case*: Mr. Henry sued the General Conference for libelous statements written by Ellen White that were supposedly based on “visions” or revelations from God. When I. H. Evans, the defense lawyer for the GC, questioned Willie White as to whether the source of the testimonies involved were “visions in the night,” he admitted under oath that they were not, stating plainly, “I cannot lie.”²⁸¹ In this case, all it took was the threat of perjury to get the Whites to tell the truth.
5. *The Case of the \$5,000 Debt*: After James White finally admitted that he had wrongly taken \$5,000 which belonged to the Battle Creek Sanitarium, and returned it on what he thought was his deathbed, he recovered and demanded the \$5,000 back. Ellen then had a “vision” where God showed her that Kellogg and the sanitarium owed James the \$5,000. Kellogg paid it back under pressure even though he had proof that the money belonged to the sanitarium. James used it to pay off the *Review and Herald*, from which he had also taken \$5,000. Then when James did die, Kellogg insisted that the money be returned to the sanitarium, producing the proof he had, and the denomination was forced to return the money, again showing that Ellen’s “vision” was bogus.²⁸²

6. *The Publication of The Living Temple*: Kellogg had proof that Ellen White's testimony accusing him of lying about the number of his books that he had published was totally false. While the prophet was shown that Kellogg had published fifty thousand copies of *The Living Temple*, the truth was that he had only published five thousand copies. Again, the problem wasn't that Ellen had made a mistake. The problem was that God had made a mistake, according to the testimony of the prophetess.²⁸³

These cases, and others like them, more than convinced Kellogg that he was the target of a plot by church leaders to discredit and destroy him. It is very difficult to call his concerns paranoia in light of the overwhelming evidence available which supports him. At this time, Kellogg obtained a copy of a stenographer's report describing a private meeting in California that was attended by President Daniells, Ellen White, and George Palmer in November of 1905. The report revealed that Daniells had indeed misrepresented many facts about Kellogg to Ellen, and that these distortions had clearly influenced and informed her supposed "visions" and testimonies.²⁸⁴ There can be no doubt that Kellogg honestly believed that his name was being intentionally smeared and slandered by church leaders, and the historical evidence in support of this is undisputable. The doctor was certainly not alone in questioning the methods of Ellen White, but he was certainly more gracious than many of her other critics.

Dr. Charles Stewart, a physician colleague of Kellogg, wrote a ninety-page booklet which detailed the contradictions, inconsistencies, and errors contained in Mrs. White's testimonies, in response to her request that such concerns be made known.²⁸⁵ He sent Ellen a copy to get her response to this documented material. His efforts resulted in vigorous attacks from church leaders, and one even called it "the most devilish thing" ever written (when impotent to respond—demonize), but no response from the prophetess was given. So, after six months of silence, Stewart published the booklet in November of 1907, at the very time Kellogg was being disfellowshipped from the church. Stewart was certainly less gentle than Kellogg in his approach, but gentler than critics like Aaron Nyman, who didn't even attempt to acknowledge any positive contributions from the prophetess, but simply denounced her as a false prophet.

Nyman wrote a scathing series of books or booklets condemning Ellen as a fraud, and attacked her in the strongest terms, in a fashion similar to the works of Dudley Canright.²⁸⁶ He entitled his series of booklets *Astounding Errors*, and saved his most destructive conclusions for the volume in the series called “Mrs. Ellen G. White: Under the Microscope.” The growing criticism that Mrs. White encountered in the 1890s and during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century plainly revealed an increasing tension in the church over her writings and authority. The evidence used to support the validity of these criticisms was very convincing then, and is even more overwhelming today, given the new research that has come to light. Her practices had a great deal to do with the Adventist Church losing extremely gifted individuals such as Canright, Ballenger, Waggoner, Jones, S. S. Davis, Stewart, Nyman, and Kellogg, and in Kellogg’s case, the entire sanitarium and much of its medical staff with him. The leading individuals who criticized the testimonies generally accused Ellen of the following four practices.

1. That she published public testimonies on many occasions, which were later proven to be false, against numerous individuals without ever addressing them about the problem first (a clear violation of Matthew 18).
2. That she often, directly or indirectly, gave the false impression that she had received information contained in her writings and personal testimonies directly from God, when in fact, she had not!
3. That she failed to live in harmony with her own testimonies concerning diet and healthful living, spreading gossip, stewardship, honesty, and various other ethical practices.
4. That she was guilty of literary theft, and misusing the writings of other authors for her own professional and financial benefit, and covering these activities up, in a manner that was intentionally misleading, dishonest and in many cases illegal.

Was Ellen a Narcissistic Personality?

In his excellent psychobiography, *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith*, Dr. Robert D. Anderson makes a convincing case that the Book of Mormon was actually the result of an exercise in narcissism for Smith, and that he modeled many of the traits of a narcissistic personality.²⁸⁷ Smith and Ellen White were obviously very different personalities, but they both seemed to share some common characteristics where narcissism is concerned. So, I will provide a statement of what the American Psychiatric Association's definition of narcissistic personality is and then briefly discuss the various components related to this definition as they may apply to what the historical evidence that we have explored reveals about Ellen White. In 1980, the APA designated narcissistic personality disorder as a formal classification in the following words:

A pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning in early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts, as indicated by five (or more) of the following:²⁸⁸

1. *Has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents).* There can be little doubt that Ellen demonstrated a consistent pattern, over her lifetime, of claiming to speak for God and to represent God in ways that were delusional, false, deceptive, and sadly misrepresentative of who God is. She certainly modeled an exaggerated sense of self-importance, and elevated her writings (largely plagiarisms) to a place of grandiosity that was pathological.
2. *Is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success and power.* It was a very heady experience for a couple of impoverished, uneducated young adults who had been victims of the Great Disappointment—false belief that Christ would return on a specific date—to become leaders in a movement where they were perceived to control the “gateway” of “God’s revelation.” Once they conned Joseph Bates into joining them and supporting them, through a false “vision” about astronomy, their fantasies of success and power seemed to materialize beyond their wildest

dreams. The wealth and power they attained was impressive, but illegitimate and pathological.

3. *Believes that he or she is special and unique.* How much more special and unique can a person be than to claim, or be hailed as, God's singular last-day prophet in human history. This is the designation that Adventists have given to Ellen White, and that she did a great deal to generate by the false claims she made for her writings. Like the claims of Joseph Smith, Ellen and her followers presumed to teach that truth had been lost down through the ages, and could only be restored through their prophet's special unique calling and anointing that would produce the true last-day remnant church. Isn't that special, and pathological!
4. *Requires excessive admiration and attention.* From her fearful and insecure childhood, throughout her adult life, Ellen craved the affirmation, admiration, and attention of others. She was able to gain such special attention through her creative malady, after her rock injury, which allowed her to escape the traditional female roles and expectations of the day. But it was her prophetic status that truly brought her the affirmation and admiration she desired, even if that status had to be gained through deception and literary theft. Those who dared to challenge her prophetic status and fail to give her the admiration she expected became the targets of her harsh and condemning testimonies that were generally pathological in nature.
5. *Has a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations.* Once Ellen gained her prophetic status, her sense of entitlement became evident through her efforts to obtain great wealth through deceptive means, her unwillingness to follow her own testimonies while condemning others who failed to follow them, the lavish lifestyle she enjoyed (more on this in the next chapter), and her huge staff of aides who served and assisted her. By insisting that the testimonies she received were mandates from God, she expected to be treated as the voice of God on earth, and failure to comply with her "visions" and

testimonies were pathologically considered to be an affront to God.

6. *Is interpersonally exploitive, i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends.* We have repeatedly seen this pattern replicated in the life of Ellen White throughout this book. She regularly takes advantage of her own followers for financial gain, and exploits and manipulates Adventists through her plagiarized writings and “visions” to control church theology and the behavior of church members. Her manipulation and exploitation are clearly for pathological self-benefit and the pathological need to control others.
7. *Lacks empathy, is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others.* It is hard to empathize with others when you are busy condemning them based on professed “visions” you are receiving from God. Many who benefitted from their relationship with the prophet claimed that she was a caring and loving person, but those who dared to cross her or disagree with her experienced her wrath and condemnation in a manner that was extremely self-serving and unbiblical. She repeatedly condemned people publicly before contacting them personally, a clear violation of Matthew 18. Like most of her behaviors, she could seem to be empathetic when it served her needs, but had a pathological absence of empathy when she felt threatened.
8. *Is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her.* It is no coincidence that any Adventist who rose to prominence or became better known than Ellen, such as Mayor William Gage or Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, became the target of the prophet’s visions, testimonies, and condemnations. There was only room for one at the top of the Adventist hierarchy, after her husband and Joseph Bates were dead, in the eyes of the prophetess, and that was her matriarchal self. Although she tried to disguise her envy behind the guise of simply communicating the messages that God was supposedly giving her through visions, she was repeatedly caught basing her pathological

rebukes on false information that clearly had nothing to do with God.

9. *Shows arrogant, haughty behavior or attitudes.* On the surface, Ellen went out of her way to try to present herself as the humble servant and instrument of God. She was much more successful in this regard than her counterpart, Joseph Smith. But in reality, there is nothing more arrogant than professing to speak and write as the voice of God in the context of plagiarism and fraud. It is also the height of arrogance to flagrantly disregard the testimonies you are imposing on others in your own personal life, which is also a repeated pattern in the life of Ellen White. This kind of pathology, evident in all the points above, makes it very difficult for the reader not to conclude that Ellen suffered from some form of narcissistic personality disorder.

In the final chapter, we will explore the evidence for sociopathy in the prophet's life as well. But when comparing the odd and idiosyncratic personality of the amazingly successful doctor, John Harvey Kellogg, to the equally successful, but very pathological Ellen White, it is not surprising that where Adventism was concerned, the prophetess realized her wish of dethroning King Kellogg.

Questions

1. What explains the transition that occurred from Ellen functioning as a motherly figure for Kellogg who helped empower his success to the prime figure who denounced the doctor and was most responsible for him being severed from the Adventist Church?
2. Why did Ellen White's strange, bizarre, and discredited views about vital force physiology live on for decades after her death in Adventism, when Kellogg's similar views quickly died out well before his death?
3. What explains the extreme restraint Kellogg exercised with regard to his criticisms of Ellen White, given the unrestrained attacks and condemnations that the prophetess heaped on the doctor?
4. What is your conclusion about narcissistic pathology in the life of Ellen White, based on the historical evidence presented in this volume and the DSM criteria provided?



Ellen G. White with family “Elmshaven” California
August 24, 1913

Photo courtesy of Ellen G. White Estate

CHAPTER 14

The Death of Prophecy

God has seen fit to thrust me into positions which He has not placed any other one in our ranks. He has laid upon me burdens of reproof that He has not given to any other one.

—3T

Whatever contradicts God's word, we may be sure proceeds from Satan.

—*Patriarchs and Prophets*

The story is told of a father who was extremely frustrated that he had such a charming son who was a habitual liar. So, the dad broke down and bought a sophisticated robot that could detect a lie and then would slap the liar in the face. He set it on the family table when he got home, explained what it was, and asked his son if he ditched school that day. The son said, "No, I stayed on campus all day long." The robot immediately slapped him in the face. "Okay," said the boy, "I went to a PG-rated movie with some friends." The robot slapped him again. "I'm sorry," said the son, "I was off using drugs with a girl." The father exploded, "When I was your age, I lived by the rules, I didn't take drugs, or take advantage of girls." The robot immediately turned and slapped the father in the face. His wife started laughing hysterically, and said, "I guess it's obvious that he's your son!" The robot then proceeded to roll over and smack the mother in the face.

Sociopathy in Ellen and Adventism

Compulsive lying is a trait that often exists in dysfunctional families, and is common with antisocial personalities, and especially with high-functioning sociopaths. Sociopaths typically engage in behaviors which harm others in some way for their own self-benefit. High-functioning sociopaths may seem to be very successful in their work or careers and manage to maintain a marriage and family as well. But their actions and

attitudes, which are meant to come across as warm and charming, are actually intended to deceptively manipulate, exploit, and control others to benefit the sociopath. High-functioning sociopaths differ from their low-functioning counterparts, and from antisocial personalities who have psychopathic traits in a number of significant ways.

Unlike psychopathic personalities, they do not have a strong genetic or biological link to anger and rage, do not usually have abusive backgrounds, and do not generally engage in behavior that is overtly cruel or violent. Unlike low-functioning sociopaths, they do not generally lack education and do not typically have average or below-average intelligence.

In fact, they will often have high levels of emotional intelligence. So, they do not have poor interpersonal skills, or make overt attempts to intimidate, coerce, or threaten others to get their way. They are much subtler and sophisticated in their methods of manipulating, exploiting, controlling, and deceiving others to ultimately benefit themselves. There are many symptoms and components of the high-functioning sociopathic personality that overlap with or mirror the narcissistic personality disorder that we already discussed in relation to Ellen White. Let us briefly turn to these now.

1. *Above-average intelligence.* The high-functioning sociopath is capable of manipulating others without making their attempts to exploit and control obvious. Where Ellen White was concerned, even though she did not seem to have a lot of creative intelligence, she did have the intelligence to overcome her very meager formal education, and to con or manipulate an entire religion into believing she was the anointed last-day prophet of God.
2. *Lack of empathy.* Like the narcissist, the high-functioning sociopath is concerned with accomplishing his or her ends, not with understanding or caring for other people. But this kind of sociopath is generally tremendously effective at deceiving people and making them think they are cared about for the purposes of using them for self-centered reasons. In Ellen's case, she secretly stole from other authors and basically used and manipulated an

entire denomination of church members to become a revered prophet and religious icon.

3. *Calculating behaviors.* High-functioning sociopaths are generally strongly driven and determined individuals. They typically possess a high level of self-love ([narcissism](#)), and a sense of grandiosity which justifies their plans to control and manipulate others through means that are often unethical or immoral. As in the case where Ellen premeditates a faked “vision” to dupe Joseph Bates into embracing her prophetic gift and giving her and her husband financial and emotional support, behaviors are often highly predetermined and calculated.
4. *Secretive tendencies.* High-functioning sociopaths tend to hide their real selves and their real motives with great success. They don’t really like people, but they are great at pretending to like others. They seldom confide in others or reveal private information about themselves, unless it is to manipulate. Where others are concerned, they generally live a lie. This certainly fits with the life of Ellen White, who hid her plagiarisms, lied about and denied them, covered up and refused to acknowledge her false prophecies, and engaged in repeated activities which were in direct conflict with the testimonies she imposed on others.
5. *Charisma and charm.* Again, the high-functioning sociopath is not generally an extravert or one who enjoys socializing with people, but such a person generally displays excellent social skills, and has very high emotional intelligence. It is striking to see what a high percentage of politicians, elected church administrators, and even pastors in general have sociopathic tendencies or personality traits. Ellen was extremely gifted at appearing to be a very humble, loving, and caring person, and as she got older, she became the sweet little grandmother, except to those who dared to cross her. In which case, she became the master of passive-aggressive behavior.
6. *Hypersensitivity.* The high-functioning sociopath is typically very defensive. They are generally easily threatened because they have a lot to hide related to their secrecy and deception. Therefore, they tend to be quick to anger when they perceive

they don't have someone's approval or may be potentially exposed. This is because they crave the admiration from others, similar to the narcissist. When relating this to Ellen, she was extremely sensitive to criticisms and reacted to them with "visions" and testimonies that released the wrath of God on her critics.

7. *Addictive behaviors.* It is common for a person who is a high-functioning sociopath [to struggle](#) with addiction or addictions. Compulsive, controlling behaviors and reactions can lead to issues with eating disorders, shopping addictions, gambling, sex, alcohol, and drugs. Where the prophetess was concerned, she hid an addiction to homemade alcohol for years, until it became life-threatening, and then only admitted it in her private diary. But rather than admitting that she was addicted to alcohol, which she vigorously condemned as an avid abolitionist, she claimed to have an addiction to vinegar, which is not addicting. Clearly, it was the vinegar wine she made, which could have had a high alcohol content.
8. *An incapacity to experience guilt.* Sociopaths in general, including high-functioning sociopaths, rationalize and justify their behaviors so that they believe they are almost never wrong and almost never truly need to apologize. They basically function without a conscience, no matter who they hurt, or how many they hurt, in order to get their way. In the case of Ellen, she was able to rationalize all kinds of plagiarism and literary theft to destroy people's lives with testimonies she attributed to the Lord, exploit church members for money, and commit other forms of hypocrisy, deception, and fraud, all in the name of God.²⁸⁹

Here again, it is not my intention to diagnose the prophetess, but to provide the reader with the historical evidence and the components of certain pathologies, and let the reader draw his or her own conclusions. To me, what makes Ellen's pathologies so dangerous and damaging is not just her willingness to hurt others, steal from others, and deceive multitudes for her own self-promotion and benefit, but her willingness to project her own errors, condemnations, and character flaws on to God. For example, in the

next section, we will see how Ellen attributes the most racist theory and ideology imaginable to God, who was supposedly the source of her vision. After her death, church leaders would learn to take her “visions” and testimonies and perpetuate the pathology for their own sociopathic purposes. From my perspective, based on thirty-five years of experience in the Adventist ministry, there is an interesting parallel between the pathological tendencies of the prophet, and what I have found with Adventist Church leadership throughout its history (discussed later), and during my lifetime.

As a seminary student at Andrews University, in Michigan, I had the privilege of specializing in psychological testing under Professor Elden Chalmers, who was a psychologist who conducted extensive research on Adventists. He compared SDA personality traits to the general population, and then to ministers and ministerial students in the denomination. He was very concerned about the findings he uncovered and spoke to me often about them. Not only did Adventists as a whole score at a level that was more psychologically unhealthy than the general population, but also, SDA clergy did worse. His biggest consternation centered on the findings that Adventist ministers were way more expedient and lacking in truthfulness than Adventists in general and the population at large. As a rule, SDA ministers scored shockingly above average on the expediency scale (showing a lack of conscience), and much lower on the truthfulness scale (showing an inclination to deceive) on the 16PF personality profile than he ever imagined. And generally, when this was not the case, they scored extremely high on the distortion scale, indicating that their scores were invalid, and that the test had not been answered honestly.

Martha Stout, in the last chapter of her excellent book *The Sociopath Next Door*, argues that at least one in twenty-five Americans is a sociopath who will “lie cheat, steal and hurt others in other ways to get ahead, with no pangs of conscience or guilt at all.” The problem with these kind of statistics is that it is impossible to determine, especially with the number of high-functioning sociopaths that are operating in society, their accuracy, because HF sociopaths are so skillful at hiding and disguising who they are. Stout recognizes this challenge and estimates that one in twenty-five doesn’t begin to cover the number of sociopaths in Congress, for example. Simply observing their self-serving behaviors and the ridiculously low

approval rating they are given by the public makes it extremely likely that 4 percent is far too low for them.

However, it is important not to overgeneralize as well. Just as the millennials have often been inappropriately written off as a generation of narcissists, so Bruce Cannon Gibney has written off the baby boomers as *A Generation of Sociopaths: How the Baby Boomers Betrayed America*. As a boomer myself, I would be the first to admit that our generation has more than our share of sociopaths, but this is no excuse for exaggerated labels. At the same time, observation can be a telling factor where research is lacking, due to the shrewd ability to avoid detection that high-functioning sociopaths possess. Shortly after I graduated from seminary, I was invited to become the campus chaplain for Loma Linda University in 1980, which at that time had two campuses and was the best known SDA university in the world.

Our office was responsible for hosting the weekly chapel speakers who came from all over the nation, including various church leaders who came from headquarters in Washington, DC. Because we were located close to Disneyland and all the other amusements of Southern California, it was not at all uncommon for such individuals to bring their families, call their office from our office a few times during the week, and enjoy a week's vacation on the church's dime. As chaplain, I also had to try to comfort staff and faculty who were fired and in many cases unfairly used and abused by university administration. I found over my many years there that Adventist university and church administrators operated very much like Congress, high-functioning sociopaths, in the way they treated people. Our office was close to the Conference Office, the home of local church administrators who had plush offices in a plush building, but in far too many cases just seemed to be using up space. Or in some cases, they were never in their offices, and were getting rich working a second job.

These patterns went to the very top of the church hierarchy. In 1993, I wrote a very influential book in Adventist subculture entitled *Adventism for a New Generation*, which was used as a textbook on many SDA college and university campuses. I also participated in the 1995 General Conference in Utrecht, Netherlands. After I returned, I preached a controversial sermon at our university church entitled "Millstone Madness," which was quite critical of the complete marginalization and disenfranchisement of the younger generation in Adventist Church politics. Not long after that, the

General Conference president made a personal appointment to meet with me on our campus, with an aide present. I assumed I was in for it, because this kind of thing just didn't happen. He opened the meeting by complimenting me on my many accomplishments, and even said that he agreed with much of what was in my book and my sermon, but that influential people (donors) had insisted that he "set me straight" on his next trip out west.

Not long after this, that General Conference president was forced to step down for financial fraud and misuse of church funds. Just another example of a high-functioning sociopath, but in this case, one who was not skilled enough to get away with it. My experience in Adventism convinced me that Ellen White birthed a movement and many spiritual children that followed in her footsteps. But none of her followers were as proficient as she when it came to being a highly successful and sophisticated con artist. I think, it can reasonably be argued, that she was the most successful con artist in history. Much has been made of the fact that the *Smithsonian Magazine* (November 29, 2014) named Ellen one of the "100 most significant" Americans of all time. That her books have been translated into more languages than any other author, other than the Bible. That the church which she cofounded and over which she presided as the final last-day prophet now boasts some twenty million members worldwide.

But the Bible says, "There is nothing concealed that will not be revealed" (Luke 12:2). Ultimately, that is referring to the final judgment, but it can also have application in this life. We now know that nearly every one of Ellen's books were the product of plagiarism. They were not really her books at all, and to make matters worse, she attributed them to God, while greedily seeking every royalty possible. We know that the prophetess did not take her own "visions" and testimonies seriously, but secretly disregarded them in a manner which was so flagrant that it is amazing she could be so imposing of them on others and so abusive to those who failed to conform. We know that she repeatedly put forth false prophecies and then dishonestly covered them up. We now know that she lived a lavish lifestyle and obtained great wealth from her prophetic role, while claiming to be a humble servant. And worst of all, that she taught many false, outrageous, embarrassing, and immoral things, which she attributed to

“visions” or revelations from God. We will turn to one of the worst examples next.

From Racism to Rowen: Con Questions

In the Broadway musical *The Book of Mormon*, Elder Kevin Price sings, “I believe that in 1978 God changed his mind about black people.” This line drew many laughs, largely because it was true. In a June of 1978 official letter, the first presidency of the LDS Church reversed a long history of racism and white supremacy with these words: “all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color.” The revelation was intended not only to remove the ban on blacks, who had previously been relegated to an inferior status, but also act as an eraser for all the sins of racism committed by the church in the past. Mormon apostle Bruce R. McConkie declared, “It doesn’t make a particle of difference, what anybody ever said about the Negro matter before the first day of June of this year, 1978.” In other words, the past history of racism made no difference, and was to be abandoned with no acknowledgment of its immorality and without apology.

While Mormon founder, Joseph Smith Jr., was surprisingly egalitarian in his views of race for his day, it was his successor, Brigham Young, who passionately injected racism into church theology. In 1852, based on his belief that black people were cursed with dark skin as punishment for Cain’s murder of his brother Abel, he decreed, “Any man having one drop of the seed of Cane in him cannot hold the priesthood.” He taught that black-white intermarriage was so sinful that it could only be atoned for by having one’s “head cut off” and spilling “his blood upon the ground.” The church also held to the doctrine that preexistent spirits of black people had sinned by joining in Lucifer’s rebellion against God in heaven. Therefore, blacks could not be included in sacred ordinances that prepared individuals and families for the afterlife, and were necessary to receive “celestial glory.”²⁹⁰ These previous doctrines now became defunct.

But Adventism has no living prophets to reverse the curse of false “visions” and revelations of the past. Unlike Mormonism, which claims to have a progression of prophets who can correct the errors of history, Adventism has no such mechanism. Its only way of dealing with the errors

and pathology of the prophet is to ignore or deny what she wrote. There have been a few hard-core apologists (contortionists) who have attempted to justify all that the prophetess has written and done, but the mounting of time and evidence ultimately discredits these White supremacists (pardon the pun). As we shall see, as we turn our attention to Ellen's testimonies about race.

In 1864, Ellen White wrote, based on what God had revealed to her, what many consider to be her two most controversial and outrageous statements. These words graphically described the "amalgamation" between "man and beast" that occurred before the flood, and the application of this practice after the flood to "certain races of men" in our modern era.

We will let the prophet speak for herself, and then attempt to analyze how these statements relate to her many other testimonies that are racist in nature.

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.²⁹¹

In Ellen White's day, it was commonly believed that it was possible for a human and certain animals to sexually produce offspring. This can be found in various sources, including the Book of Jasher (published in 1840), which falsely claimed to be a lost book of the Bible. This book had a major influence on Joseph Smith in Mormonism, and Ellen seems to copy from it in several places in her writings.²⁹² Ellen claims this "amalgamation of man and beast" was the base, vile sin above all others that literally caused the destruction of the human race, except those saved in the ark, because it defaced the "image of God" by changing and diluting the very nature of humanity—making it less than human. She then goes on to connect this practice after the flood with "certain races of men" that were thought to be less than human in her day.

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.²⁹³

These testimonies caused both vindication and outrage in the church of Ellen's day. They were presumed vindication for the overt racists in Adventism, who believed that the Negro race was somehow less than human. And they caused outrage for those who were sure that God would reveal nothing of the kind to the prophetess. We need to remember that these supposed revelations were written during the time of the Civil War, when passions about the Negro race were at a pinnacle. The ongoing controversy over these published statements escalated to the point where the Whites and other leaders recognized that something had to be done to save the prophet's status. So, in 1868, Uriah Smith, the *Review* editor, took it upon himself to write a booklet attempting to defend Ellen and diffuse the situation. It was entitled *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White, A Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts According to the Scripture*. And in it, he presumed to answer the critical question, "Which races are the product of amalgamation between man and beast?" Smith tried to cleverly protect Ellen from the growing charges of "racism against negroes" by claiming that the races the prophet was referring to, which came from the union of man and beast, were "such cases as the wild Bushmen of Africa, some tribes of the Hottentots, and perhaps the Digger Indians of our own country."

How Smith thought he could isolate such a practice to such groups over centuries is purely laughable. And the practice itself is laughable to those who have any knowledge of genetics today. Both Ellen and Smith were ignorantly trying to defend something that was a genetic impossibility. If Ellen had truly seen these things in vision, she could have spoken for herself, but because the position she had taken was really impossible to justify, the Whites were glad for Uriah Smith to try to bail them out of their bind. James White carefully examined Smith's proposed solution and then embraced it by taking two thousand of Smith's books to sell at camp meeting as a solution to their problem. He promoted the sale of the books in advance in the church paper, the *Review and Herald*, with the following words.

The Association has just published a pamphlet entitled, “The Visions of Mrs. E.G. White, A Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts According to the Scriptures.” It is written by the editor of the *Review*. While carefully reading the manuscript, I felt grateful to God that our people could have this able defense of those views they so much love and prize, which others despise and oppose.²⁹⁴

James and Ellen, along with Uriah Smith, W. C. White (Ellen’s son), and D. D. Robinson (her secretary), all believed and were fully convinced that her statements described the interbreeding of human beings with animals or beasts. It was not until 1947 after Dr. Frank Marsh tried to convince an Adventist panel exploring these statements that such an interpretation was impossible based on biological science that the church and the White Estate, along with apologists such as Francis Nichol, tried to deny the obvious meaning of what she wrote. Marsh and Nichol attempted to claim that Ellen was referring to interbreeding between various species of animals and between various races of humans.²⁹⁵ This interpretation clearly did not fit with the context of her statements and failed the test of Occam’s razor—whatever defies the straightforward meaning and demands far-reaching assumptions is to be rejected.

The idea that Ellen was referring to interracial marriage in these statements is certainly wrong, based on the fact that she had condemned such relationships, “There should be no intermarriage between white and the colored race,”²⁹⁶ but never suggested that such an act brought on the flood or resulted in distinctive or subhuman races. Ellen’s writings about blacks were definitely racist from our perspective today, but shared by many in her culture. It is the claim that she was given these views in “visions” from God that makes them so revoltingly offensive. It is ironic that Ellen insisted she received revelations from God about the black race, which directly contradicted the Bible. In scripture, we are told that the saved will consist of people from “every kindred, tribe and nation,” all racial and ethnic groups will be represented. But Ellen saw that God would turn everyone “white” in heaven. Compare these two statements.

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and

language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. (Revelation 7:9)

You are the children of God. He has adopted you, and He desires you to form characters here that will give you entrance into the heavenly family. Remembering this, you will be able to bear the trials which you meet here. *In heaven there will be no color line; for all will be as white as Christ himself.* Let us thank God that we can be members of the royal family. (Ellen White, *The Gospel Herald*, March 1, 1901, paragraph 20, italics provided)

First of all, Jesus wasn't white. He was a Palestinian Jew. So evidently, Ellen saw that Jesus was whitewashed too. Second, the word says they have "white robes," not white skin. Somehow, the prophet confused these two things. Third, the prophetess refers to this whitewashed multitude as the royal family, as if whiteness and royalty go together. I highly doubt, and indeed deny, that God showed Ellen any of this. But there is much more. While the Bible teaches that every human being will be judged and either rewarded with heaven or punished by hell, Ellen's testimonies insist that the slave of her day would not be allowed into heaven, nor be subject to hell. She saw that they would be as though they had never existed. Again, compare and contrast.

And I saw a great white throne...and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God...they were judged *every man* according to their works...and *whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.* (Revelation 20:11–15, italics provided)

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' 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. (Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 1:193, italics provided)

Ellen also prophesied, falsely, that slavery would reemerge in the Southern states after the Civil War. And because she believed that the slave could not be saved, she urged that the truth of the gospel not be preached openly to the “colored people.”

Slavery will again be revived in the Southern States; for the spirit of slavery still lives. Therefore, it will not do for those who labor among the colored people to preach the truth as boldly and openly as they would be free to do in other places. Even Christ clothed His lessons in figures and parables to avoid the opposition of the Pharisees. (Ellen White, Spalding, Magan Collection, 21 and 2 MR #153, 300, italics provided)

Other testimonies by Ellen White about blacks include the following and again demonstrate that her views concerning the Negro race were drawn from the culture of her day, and not from “visions” given to her by God.

- “The Colored People should not urge that they be placed on an equality with White People” (*Testimonies*, 9:214).
- “We cannot expect that they... Colored People] will be as firm and clear in their ideas of morality” (*Testimonies*, 9:223).
- “No one is capable of clearly defining the proper position of the colored people” (*Testimonies*, 9:213).
- “The work of proclaiming the truth for this time is not to be hindered by an effort to adjust the position of the Negro race” (*Testimonies*, 9:214).

But clearly, her testimony teaching that African tribes and other tribal peoples were the product of “amalgamation between man and beast,” creating a subhuman race, was the racist slander that laid the foundation for all these other statements. Again, it was commonly believed in her day, by a wide spectrum of Americans, that blacks were not fully human, which was also used as a justification for slavery. While I consider it highly unfortunate that Ellen bought into these false views, that does not compare to her claim that she received these testimonies from “visions” given to her from God. It is one thing to be a racist yourself. It is quite another to make God a racist, and to teach that the Almighty is ignorant about the universal

laws of genetics. This is the tragic sin of Ellen White, not that she was the product of her day, or even that she plagiarized to extreme degrees, but that she slandered God to give herself prophetic status and power.

It is important to remember that Ellen White had no real credibility on her own. The authority and influence that was given to her writings was based on her absolute claim that everything she wrote in her articles and books came directly from revelation and “visions” from God.

I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of light shining from the throne.²⁹⁷

We have already noted many of her other declarations of divine anointing and authority, so I won't repeat them here. But Ellen insists that she speaks for God on nearly every topic, and the sad reality is that her testimonies include the kind of immoral racism we have just explored. They also include the many other false, and in some cases dangerous, teachings we have already discussed, as well as many ridiculous statements that are truly absurd. I won't go into all of these, for I have already given references where many of them can be found. But let me present a few examples so you get a flavor of their nature.

- If you tune pianos for a living, you will go insane.
In many cases I have advised out-of-door work for piano tuners, telling them that unless they changed their business, they would have to deal with insanity. We are made up of nerves and senses, as well as conscience and affections. All parts of the living machinery are to be wisely cared for and considerately treated. (Letter 104, 1901)

I have known several long-term piano tuners, and none of them ever showed the slightest indications of insanity.

- Christian women are to cover their faces and heads with a veil in public.

I was shown that the people of God should not imitate the fashions of the world. Some have done this and are fast losing the peculiar, holy character which should distinguish them as God's people. I was pointed back to God's Ancient People, and was led to compare their apparel with the mode of dress in these last days. What a difference! What a change! Then the women were not so bold as now. When they went in public, they covered their faces with a veil. In these last days, fashions are shameful and immodest... The small bonnets, exposing the face and head, show a lack of modesty... The inhabitants are growing more and more corrupt. (*Testimonies*, 1:188–189)

Talk about sexist, how much more corrupt can you get then, showing your face in public? Ellen failed to observe her own counsel here as well.

- The youth of her day were largely “worthless,” and nearly “all animal,” including “many professed Christians.”

A large share of the youth now living are worthless... Many professed Christians are more animal than divine. They are, in fact, about all animal. (*A Solemn Appeal*, 62, 173)

The only ones who didn't fall into this category were non-masturbaters.

- Condemnation of schools in cities or close to urban environments.

Never can the proper education be given to the youth in this country, or any other country, unless they are separated a wide distance from the cities. The customs and practices in the cities unfit the minds of the youth for the entrance of truth... The very atmosphere of these cities is full of poisonous malaria. (*Special Testimonies On Education*, 87–88)

Again, Ellen reflected the cultural urban phobia that was common in her day in writing these words, which Adventists have conveniently ignored.

- Warnings against marriage, being a woman, holidays, drinking tea, singing, and laughing.

There are many who are losing their souls in this age of the world, by becoming absorbed in the thoughts of marriage, and in the marriage relation itself. (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 25, 1888)

Thus Satan used an unconsecrated woman [Jezebel] to sway the heart of the king, and through the king to cause all Israel to sin. It is a terrible thing to be an instrument in the hands of Satan. Satan chooses women, for he can use them more successfully than he can men. (*Manuscript Releases*, 10:76; Ms. 29, 1911, 13)

The many holidays have had a baleful influence upon the minds of the youth; their effect is demoralizing to the government, and they are entirely contrary to the will of God... These holidays, with all their train of evil, result in twentyfold more misery than good... Through the observance of holidays the people both of the world and of the churches have been educated to believe that these lazy days are essential to health and happiness, but the results reveal that they are full of evil, which is ruining the health and the morals, and demoralizing the country... But from their youth up they have been educated to the popular idea that the appointed holidays must be treated with respect and be observed. From the light that the Lord has given me, these days have no more influence for good than would the worship of heathen deities; for this is really nothing less. These days are Satan's special harvest seasons. (*Manuscript Release* 941, "Depressed Conditions in Australia and the Remedy"; *Special Testimonies on Education*, 86, 87, 92, 93, 97)

The practice of using liquor, tobacco, tea, and coffee must be overcome by the converting power of God. There

shall nothing enter into the kingdom of God that defileth. (MR, 20:6)

I beseech my brethren and sisters to lay aside their darling luxury of tea and coffee, the use of which creates an unnatural state of mind and body. "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments" [Rev. 3:4]. How are their garments defiled? By eating of that which brings disease and infirmity. (MR, 20:6)

Singing should not be allowed to divert the mind from the hours of devotion. If one must be neglected, let it be the singing. It is one of the great temptations of the present age to carry the practice of music to extremes, to make a great deal more of music than of prayer. Many souls have been ruined here. When the Spirit of God is arousing the conscience and convicting of sin, Satan suggests a singing exercise or a singing school, which, being conducted in a light and trifling manner, results in banishing seriousness, and quenching all desire for the Spirit of God. Thus the door of the heart, which was about to be opened to Jesus, is closed and barricaded with pride and stubbornness, in many cases never again to be opened. By the temptations attending these singing exercises, many who were once really converted to the truth have been led to separate themselves from God. They have chosen singing before prayer, attending singing schools in preference to religious meetings, until the truth no longer exerts its sanctifying power upon their souls. Such singing is an offense to God. (*Review and Herald*, July 24, 1883)

You sport and joke and enter into hilarity and glee. Does the Word of God sustain you in this? It does not. Christ is our example. Do you imitate the great Exemplar? Christ often wept but never was known to laugh. I do not say it is a sin to laugh on any occasion. But we cannot go astray if we imitate the divine, unerring Pattern. We are living in a sad age of this world's history. (*Manuscript Releases*, 6:90–91)

There is no end to such statements. Ellen even warns that those who take drugs and medications to treat problems that arise from their “intemperate” lives will not be healed by God, and their prayers will not be answered.²⁹⁸ This is particularly ironic, given SDA medical practice today. The point is that Ellen reflected the thinking of her day, much of it absurd, and attributed these beliefs to God. And in the process, she did a lot of harm. I can still remember my SDA grandmother, who was a big EGW fan, strongly reprimanding me for laughing over something that was completely innocent when I was a small child—telling me that the prophet condemned such behavior. Thankfully, her rebukes did not take with me. I still love to laugh today. But it is not surprising that SDAs (SAdventists) test out to be much more sober and serious than the general population. When you are taught that all these condemnations were given by God, it puts you in a difficult spot.

But what is most disturbing is the prophet’s willingness to denigrate and blaspheme the character of God in the name of God. She was “shown” that Jesus never laughed, but this is complete nonsense in light of the fact that the Bible teaches that “God laughs” (Psalm 2:4, 37:13), and that Jesus was the most joyful human being who ever lived, in spite of being a man who was well acquainted with sorrow and grief (Isaiah 53:3). Hebrews 1:9 tells us that Jesus was anointed with joy more than all others. He modeled and experienced joy to a greater degree than any other human being. Can you be the most joyful person in the world and never laugh? Again, if this was an isolated absurdity, it might be worth debating, but Ellen’s writings are so filled with such absurdities that it is literally tragic that she dared to attribute these ideas to God.

In previous works I have tried to avoid the conclusion that Ellen White was an outright con artist,²⁹⁹ but the additional historical evidence that has surfaced during the last ten years has forced me to accept the opposite view. Ellen truly was a very successful con artist, but as she approached the end of her life, some church leaders felt insecure about losing their “sure word of prophecy.” World War I had started nearly a year before the prophet’s death in July of 1915, and many Adventist preachers were proclaiming this war to be the final battle of Armageddon. But with no prophetic confirmation, their claims seemed to be empty and lacking authority. To fill

this prophetic void, a very clever con artist by the name of Margaret Rowen ambitiously sought to be named as Ellen's successor.

Rowen was a careful observer and follower of Mrs. White. Like her prophetic idol, she decided to launch her own prophetic ministry by a meticulously planned and premeditated fraud. But unlike Ellen, who was able to skillfully dupe Joseph Bates into supporting her through a feigned astronomy vision, Rowen was not quite so successful. She claimed to have a specific "vision" where God showed her a signed document by Ellen White, dated August 10, 1911, in which the prophet named Rowen as the next prophetess of the church. She then convinced one of her most loyal followers, Dr. Bert Fullmer, that this document had been wrongfully removed from the White vault files at Elmshaven and that God was calling him to put the document back in the files because he had access to them. Fullmer, who trusted Rowen's "visions" completely, agreed to right this wrong, because Rowen totally fooled him into believing that the following words, which she forged, had been written by Ellen White.

In the night season the spirit of the Lord came upon me and I was shown the great falling away among the remnant. Many times the written testimony was read from the sacred desk, and the reader himself failed to apply it to his own heart and profit by it. Rather than shape their lives by the words from heaven, they would permit that which condemned them to be wiped from the printed page. But I saw that God would keep his promises to Israel and would have a people—a remnant unspotted from the world. To accomplish this I saw that it was necessary to call for a reform in the church of God. I saw that the Spirit of God moved upon a few to seek for a purification of heart. This work would rise and fall again and again; the allurements of the world seemed more than they could withstand. I then saw that just a little way in the future after my labors were finished, that God would call one to give the cry to the church of God, "Repent, Repent. Lift up the standard. Purify yourselves for the coming of your King." I then saw little companies formed to call on God for help. I saw these earnest praying ones much annoyed by their brethren, criticized and condemned, the messenger of God

suffered much humiliation and condemnation, but she longed to see the church made white and clean, ready for the Saviour's coming. Through all of her trials she was true to her calling. In her heart was the love that the Master would have for the brethren. I saw that many were shaken out because of the straight testimony, but the little praying companies increased until the church of God was honeycombed with earnest, praying people. I saw that many of the leaders refused to accept the messenger. I saw that the one sent of God was one of limited education, small in stature, and would sign the messages
Margaret W. Rowen. [Signed] Ellen G. White³⁰⁰

This forgery, which would not be exposed for several years, was only one of many elaborate frauds and deceptions that Rowen engaged in to pursue her dream of succeeding Ellen White. To justify her misuse of ministry donations that she stole to maintain a lavish lifestyle, she invented a false identity. Rowen claimed that she was the illegitimate daughter of Mary Mills, the wife of a very wealthy businessman in Pennsylvania. She even made trips to Philadelphia to prove that she was the biological daughter of Mills, bringing back doctored pictures she paid for, which were actually pictures of herself subjected to an aging process to make her look twenty years older. She insisted that her mother was giving her tremendous sums of money, but eventually her real biological family debunked the whole story. In the meantime, her followers continued to grow, and she claimed to have many "visions" that complemented and added to the testimonies of Sister White.

Her revelations led to her foretelling many future events, including the "vision" of her first prophecy that World War I would end in the biblical Battle of Armageddon. Such prophetic words breathed new hope and energy into SDA preachers and evangelists who longed again for prophetic authority to bolster their sermons. Arthur White, one of Ellen's grandsons, would later identify the church leaders who were the strongest supporters of Rowan and what became of her offshoot Adventist Reform Movement. The three most prominent church leaders who supported Rowen were P. W. Province from Oregon, and two Los Angeles ministers, J. F. Blunt and F. I. Richardson. Pastor Blunt even produced a forty-two-page booklet entitled

The Rowen Pamphlet, which proclaimed Rowen as the “new prophet” and God-appointed messenger of Adventism. Other well-known leaders who embraced Rowen’s claims included Elder Matthew Larson, pastor of an SDA church in Arkansas, Kansas, and his colleague Elder Julian Tvedt, who pastored in Coffeyville, Kansas.³⁰¹

The Rowen movement struggled for several reasons. First, because she was a woman who had serious and obvious character flaws of deceitfulness and self-centeredness that were acknowledged by her immediate family and many others who had known her for a long time (she was not a high-functioning sociopath). Second, most Adventist leaders, especially those with the most power, were not at all anxious to have a prophetic successor to Ellen looking over their shoulders. There was not the psychological need for, and dependence on, a prophet that existed when Ellen began her prophetic ministry with a small group of desperate adults who had been devastated by the Great Disappointment. Finally, Rowen became increasingly flagrant in her exploitation and abuse of her followers, until her behaviors degenerated into psychopathic violence. As her pilfering of ministry funds and other immoral deeds became exposed, her most faithful supporter deserted her, and she responded by literally plotting his death.

Bert Fullmer, her physician donor and devotee, began publishing his own newsletter entitled *Bearing Witness* in the 1920s. When he became convinced that Rowen was misusing donated funds, he did his own investigation and concluded that she was guilty of forgery, fraud, and grand theft. He published these findings in his newsletter in 1926 and apologized to fellow believers that he had allowed himself to be duped by the professed prophet. Rowen was so angry over this, and so fearful that her source of money was about to be cut off, that she hired two thugs who were associates of hers to beat Dr. Fullmer and poison him to death. On February 27, 1927, Fullmer received a midnight phone call asking him to treat a very sick child in cabin 11 of a motel near Lankershim. When he arrived, he was beaten by Rowen’s two loyal aides who had met with Rowen in the room shortly before the doctor arrived. While attempting to inject him with poison, their needle was broken, saving Fullmer’s life. The police soon arrived, arresting Rowen and her two accomplices. All three were convicted and sentenced to between one and ten years in San Quintin Prison which

took women at the time. After serving her time, Rowen moved to Florida and continued her work as a religious con artist.

The sad saga of Rowen is significant with reference to Ellen White for a number of reasons. First, it is interesting that Ellen did not expose Rowen as a fraud based on her supposed “visions” when the pretender was building her following. Ellen was quick to try to discredit other potential prophetic competitors who did not have the faults of Rowen, as we have noted. But in this glaring case of fraud, God and the prophet are silent, in spite of the serious threat. The obvious reason for this is that Ellen did not get the downloads she claimed from the Almighty, but always had other sources that she projected on to God for her testimonies. Second, the case of Margaret Rowen discredits the Adventist argument that Ellen White’s prophetic status can be proven by her ecstatic experiences. SDAs grow up being taught that Ellen White had “visions” and trances that could last more than an hour, that she would not blink during these times, and that her body would sometimes appear rigid with no sign of breathing. She supposedly had superhuman strength for her size. But Rowen managed to mimic these signs in a manner that led many to assume that she, too, must be a true prophet. Rowen’s criminal character clearly undermined this assumption, and exposed the danger of using such ecstatic experiences to establish prophetic status.

Third, Rowen attempted to copy the same kind of monolithic prophetic stature that Ellen White had modeled. This Old Testament authoritarian view of prophecy is completely out of step with what the New Testament teaches about the prophetic gift, and what we see modeled in New Testament and post–New Testament times. Adventist leaders who were naive and gullible enough to continue to embrace this model, with regard to Ellen White, despite the evidence of her plagiarism, clung to her words as infallible truth even after her death. Other leaders, who knew better, were faced with the dilemma of deciding how much to admit or acknowledge, knowing that Ellen’s writings represented a gold mine for the church—and a powerful source of authority for leaders in the church. But these same leaders, who were aware of the prophet’s faults and deceptions, wanted nothing to do with another prophet who was even worse than the first. So, Rowen’s claims, and the exposures of those claims, ensured the death of prophecy in Adventism.

Fourth, and finally, Ellen was careful not to name or support any successor before her death for two major reasons. On the one hand, she knew deep down that her gift was not a legitimate gift from God, as she claimed. Her works were based on plagiarism, stealing ideas from others, deceiving, and ripping off her followers. So, she was not concerned with someone else being chosen by God. On the other hand, she was very aware that her books and writings had produced an enormous income source that she had benefitted from tremendously, and that she wanted to continue to flow to her family, and to a lesser degree to the church, after her death. So, she made exclusive claims for herself that could apply to no other in Adventism to ensure that her authority, power, and wealth would live on after she passed. In the meantime, she spent her final decades in pampered luxury.

From Poverty to Luxury

It is the party line in Adventism that Ellen was a humble servant of God who lived a very simple, self-denying, and others-centered life. She supposedly died in debt because of her tremendous generosity and unwillingness to personally benefit from her amazing work and years of service. But nothing could be further from the truth. The motivations for her plagiarisms, false claims, and God attributions are not difficult to ascertain, in spite of Adventism's valiant attempts to cover them up. Ellen rapidly moved from being an uneducated, poverty-stricken teenager who married an equally poverty-stricken young man, despite preaching to others that time was too short for marriage to a young woman who was given prophetic status that would bring her amazing power and wealth. And once her husband and Joseph Bates were dead, the last three and a half decades of her very privileged life were characterized by matriarchal authority, a growing sense of entitlement, increasing wealth, a lavish lifestyle, and an elegant estate full of servants.

She died in debt, not because she was poor, but to benefit her biological heirs to the greatest degree, while she left the church responsible for her lavish expenditures, as we shall see in her will. We have already established that both James and Ellen quickly learned how to financially exploit the faithful, once they duped Bates into giving them the support that they

initially needed. Not only did they both draw salaries from the church along with some of their children, but also, they became extremely rich by seeking the greatest possible royalties on Ellen's books, as well as peddling charts, pictures, trinkets, hymnals, dress patterns, and everything else they could think of in their extensive travels to financially take advantage of naive church members. If this wasn't enough, Ellen had "visions" which used guilt to convince believers that they should give all they had to the cause because time was so short, and James managed to embezzle, or wrongfully borrow, huge sums from the church, with the divine endorsement of his wife.

Therefore, it is no wonder that the Whites accumulated a very impressive real estate portfolio while traveling at will and living lives of luxury. There have been numerous publications exposing the financial fraud and extravagance of Ellen and James,³⁰² but most of them have been dismissed by Ellen when she was alive and the church after her death, as the bitter criticisms of rejected church members. My own research convinces me that in most cases, these were generally whistleblowers who left the church, and had solid evidence for their criticisms. But by today's standards, the Whites were millionaires many times over. Because of incomplete records, it is impossible to ascertain just how much real estate the Whites accumulated in their empire. However, the records we do have reveal the following assets.

Ellen and James moved from total poverty to purchasing their first home in Rochester, New York, in 1852. The home was large enough to contain the printing work and some who worked for the *Review*, until they were able to purchase a larger facility for the press in Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1855. They would also own at least one home in Battle Creek, until they purchased their mansion in the city. During this time, they also owned a home in Iowa and property near South Bend, Indiana. After that, the Whites bought a home in Greenville, Michigan, which they sold in 1875. James built them another home in Oakland, California, in 1876. The next year they purchased a four-bedroom home in Healdsburg, California, referred to as Healdsburg Place, which Ellen would sell for a tidy profit in 1904. In 1879, James and Ellen acquired another property in the mountains of Colorado known as the White Ranch. This property also included a small cabin.

Then, in 1881, the Whites purchased "a 16-room, three-story brick Italiante mansion...a mile and a half from the center of Battle Creek."³⁰³

This large estate included thirty acres and two hundred fruit trees. James forked out six thousand dollars (probably two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand dollars in today's real estate values) for the property, which was still a bargain at that time. The Whites were often able to purchase things for less because of their positions. This mansion was not the humble, modest Battle Creek home that many Seventh-Day Adventists are shown when they tour Battle Creek today, the one that is pictured frequently in Adventist media. On the contrary, this was an elaborate mansion, a home reserved for the financial elite. This mansion was sold by Ellen after James's death for a nice profit, and it later burned down.³⁰⁴ Ellen would also buy another personal home for herself while working in Australia.

But the topper in the Whites' real estate portfolio was added in 1900, when Ellen purchased her elegant and exclusive estate in the Napa Valley known as Elmshaven for the under-market price of only five thousand dollars. If the estate were sold today, with its beautifully furnished mansion, other buildings, stables, and seventy-four acres of premium land, it would be priced at a minimum of ten million dollars. When Ellen purchased the property, it included the mansion, a two-story office building with library and vault, two separate cottage living quarters for staff, and a barn and stable filled with livestock and expensive equipment. Why would a single woman need such an estate? Because Ellen lived as an elite matriarch with a huge staff to meet her every need. Pictures and records of her servants and staff show that they were between fourteen and twenty-one in number, and included a personal nurse (Sara McEnterfer), a private cook, a copyist, a seamstress, a number of farmhands, several secretaries, and various other office assistants and office personnel.³⁰⁵

Finally, let us consider the lavish lifestyle employed by the Whites both before and after the death of James. This is a couple that brought in huge amounts of money, through questionable means, and spent huge amounts of money, even to a greater degree. Some would argue that they gave liberally to the church, but even here it often seemed to be to support their pet projects, or on projects that would benefit themselves personally. The Whites enjoyed an elitist and extravagant lifestyle where they were regularly pampered guests at numerous health spas and resorts. Some of these included Our Home on the Hillside; the Rural Health Retreat in Saint

Helena, California; Dr. Kellogg's Health Clinic in Battle Creek, Michigan; and the Dansville Clinic in New York.

Ironically, Ellen and James indulged themselves without restraint in many of the activities and practices that the prophetess strongly condemned in her testimonies. Ellen spared no expense in buying the finest of clothes and jewelry for her elaborate wardrobe. The Whites were known for eating pork and other unclean meats after Ellen's health reform vision, and the prophet in particular had a strong appetite for oysters, herrings, many types of fish, rich meats, and fried chicken, much to the consternation of Dr. Kellogg who lived by her visions, insisting on vegetarianism.³⁰⁶ While condemning and criticizing others for wasting money on photography, at a time when it was very expensive, the Whites were guilty of spending exorbitant sums on even a single photograph. In 1876, a letter written to James from Ellen shows that he spent five hundred dollars on a single negative, which corresponds to approximately twelve thousand dollars or more in today's money.³⁰⁷

Once Ellen succeeded in deceiving the church into believing that she was God's special last-day prophet, money was no longer an issue for anything she wanted to do. In an age when world travel was extremely expensive, Ellen was a globe-trotter who not only traveled to Europe and Australia, but also all over the United States, and frequently traveled first class. She was treated more like a queen or a celebrity than a humble servant of God. By contrast, Gilbert Cranmer, who started the Church of God (Seventh-Day) movement, after leaving Adventism for its shut-door teachings and reliance on Ellen White, lived a true life of self-sacrifice and self-denial. In his sixty years of ministry, forty as the founder and leader of the Church of God, he never took a salary or any form of pay for his extensive labors. No mansions, health resorts, first-class travel, servants, plagiarized books, or deceptions. He was a true servant of God, who practiced what he preached, unlike Ellen White.

The Will—Trust Services

Ellen White was remarkably consistent with regard to two things in her life. From her first "vision" to the testimonies she gave about making wills, and making her own will, she consistently misled and deceived her

followers. Second, Ellen was remarkably consistent with regard to her hypocritical failure to live up to the testimonies she imposed on her followers. This also is quite evident when we examine her last will and testament. It has been the practice of Adventism to apply significant pressure on church members to give a good portion of their estate to the church when making out their wills, based on the prophetic words of the prophetess. One of the most prominent testimonies she gives on this subject is what follows.

In disposing of your property by will, be sure that you do not forget God's cause. You are his agents, holding His property; and His claims should have your first consideration. Your wife and children, of course, should not be left destitute; provision should be made for them if they are needy. But do not, simply because it is customary, bring into your will a long line of relatives who are not needy. Let it ever be kept in mind that the present selfish system of disposing of property is not God's plan, but man's device. Christians should be reformers and break up this present system, giving an entirely new aspect to the formation of wills. Let the idea be ever present that it is the Lord's property which you are handling. The will of God in this matter is law.³⁰⁸

This quote appears in Adventist publications to inform believers that it is the God-directed duty of every church member to make out a "Christian [Adventist] Will."³⁰⁹ The prophet also makes it clear that God calls on the Adventist believer to avoid debt as one would avoid a terrible disease. It must "not be allowed" and is to be shunned like "leprosy."

Debts must not be allowed to accumulate term after term. The very highest kind of education that could be given, is to shun the incurring of debt as you would shun disease. (*Testimonies to the Church*, 6:211)

We should shun debt as we should shun the leprosy. (*Testimonies to the Church*, 6:217).

The problem with these divine dictates is that Ellen White, despite her voluminous income, died approximately \$90,000 in debt. She owed 58 creditors various sums, and her unprotected estate fell short of paying these debts by \$63,230.40. We need to remember that the rate of inflation between then and now was typically 25 to 27 times. So, \$90,000 then would be at least the equivalent of \$2,250,000 today. This is not a small debt, to say the least. And Ellen did all that she legally could to protect her assets from creditors, and to ensure that her family, particularly her sons Edson and Willie who got the lion's share of her wealth, relatives, and friends benefitted as much as possible from her estate, and that the church was left holding the bag for her debts. In other words, she did the exact opposite of what she counseled others to do. She gave her family and friends as much as she possibly could, and not only failed to give the church anything, but also saddled the church with her debts. Like so many of her other "visions" and testimonies, she simply didn't take them seriously, but didn't hesitate to lay major guilt trips on poor SDAs who believed her words to be inspired.

Some will argue that eventually the church made a fortune from her books, so the end justifies the means. But that is the problem with the prophet. The end always justifies the means, and the means were plagiarism, lying, theft of ideas, deception, fraud, destroying her enemies, and gross misrepresentation of God. If you take her "visions" seriously, Ellen makes God out to be a complete idiot. He is always showing her things that are not only untrue, but, in many cases, are absolutely ludicrous. Debt is to be shunned like leprosy. And leprosy is contracted through the eating of pork. "The eating of pork has produced scrofula, leprosy, and cancerous humors."³¹⁰ Robert Sanders, in the article that presents Ellen White's full will, which I have already referenced, quotes Dr. William Van Alstine in this regard. Van Alstine is an expert and authority on animal diseases from Purdue University, who assures us that "pigs cannot get leprosy and they cannot transfer leprosy to humans."

I have not included Ellen's will in this volume for reasons of space, and it is cumbersome reading. But I do encourage the reader to check it out in Sanders's article, and to see for yourself that Ellen did the opposite of what she claimed God showed her was to be done by His people, concerning both debt and wills. It is no wonder that Adventists do not publish or reference Ellen's will in their literature, for it is just another embarrassment,

but much more than an embarrassment, it would totally undermine the work of Adventist Trust Services, which is a multimillion-dollar business of its own. The name Trust Services is an oxymoron, because many elderly Adventists are convinced to give large sums of money to the church in their wills to the detriment of their families, and in some cases of themselves.

During my years as a university pastor, I heard numerous families complain about how the church had manipulated their loved ones through this process. And in one scandalous case, a well-off donor gave major assets to the church, only to have her fortunes change, and the church refuse to help her, leaving her in poverty after benefitting tremendously from her generosity. The deceptive ways of Ellen White have certainly been continued down through the years by Adventist Church leadership.

The Cover-Up Continues

Soon after the death of Ellen White, the polarization between those SDA leaders who had been totally deceived into believing that her writings were fully inspired by God and those who didn't came to a head. Ellen had spent much of her time during her final years at the Elmshaven paradise trying to head off this conflict. By 1908, all the major outspoken critics of Ellen and her ministry had either been disfellowshipped from the church or left the SDA Church voluntarily. Given the prophet's repeated pattern of demonizing her enemies, or those she perceived to be undermining her prophetic authority, no leader now dared to take on the prophetess directly. But many were well-informed about her faults. Ellen was fully aware of the rift that existed between her deluded followers who were extremely loyal, and pragmatic church leaders who knew most of the truth, but were unwilling to confront the prophet or reveal it to church members at large, for political reasons.

The prophetess was worried that a church split might occur, so she was trying to keep both groups satisfied. During the last decade of her life, many questions were being raised about the pillar doctrines of Adventism, such as the investigative judgment, the Sanctuary Doctrine, and whether the prophet had been right about the shut-door doctrine. Ellen tried to address these as best she could to avoid a church fracture. In the two decades before 1905, Ellen had taken a progressive position with regard to the pillar doctrines of

Adventism, for God had shown her that they were subject to “investigation and revision.”³¹¹ But during the last decade of her life when the pillars were under attack, Ellen changed her position and became very defensive of these doctrines, and now insisted that God had shown her that Adventists were to “stand by the old landmarks.”³¹²

If one were to catalogue all the contradictions like this in Ellen’s writings, it would require a book of its own, for they are legion. The prophetess was always being hit with new circumstances and information that required her “visions” and testimonies to change. For most of us, that’s called life, but when you attribute all your positions to God, things get complicated. In any case, Ellen passed away peacefully in the sense that her movement seemed to be remaining intact, without a major fragmentation and, more importantly, that she had been able to pull off one of the greatest cons in human history, without ever really being exposed. As far as her peace with the Almighty was concerned, I can only speculate that it wasn’t pretty, given the number of people she had hurt in God’s name and the amount of deception she had covered up.

But after her death, the cover-up would continue. The true believers didn’t know they were covering up lies and plagiarism as they had made an icon of the prophet. And those who knew too much had to decide how they would best benefit from a cover-up themselves. All this came to a head at the 1919 Bible Conference, where conservatives and progressives would try to determine the posthumous fate of the prophet. The progressives had the advantage, because they were in the majority and held the most powerful denominational positions at the time. A. G. Daniells was still the General Conference president, F. M. Wilcox was the *Review* editor, W. E. Howell represented the General Conference Committee, and then there were a host of scholars and professors who also took a very progressive, liberal view of Ellen’s writings. These included W. W. Prescott, who had been the president of Battle Creek College and had more recently been asked in 1910, by Willie White, to carefully examine Ellen’s book *The Great Controversy* for problems and errors. He did so, and responded with a 39-page letter that concluded with the following words.

Allow me to say in closing, that it has been quite a shock to me to find in this book so many loose and inaccurate statements;

and what I have submitted for your consideration will indicate how much of an undertaking it will be to revise this book so that it will be in harmony with the historical facts, and with the interpretation of the prophecy concerning the 1260 days which we are now adopting. If I can be of any assistance... I will be willing to do what I can in this matter.³¹³

Willie White was excited to take Prescott up on his offer and the majority of the 105 changes that Prescott recommended were incorporated into the new 1911 edition of the book. These changes, of course, raised huge criticisms from conservatives in the church. Some of whom would be listening carefully at the 1919 Bible Conference. Other academics who spoke at this conference included H. C. Lacey, a professor of religion whom conservatives would try to fire along with a colleague after the meetings ended; C. A. Shull, a history professor who called the conference “the most gripping and meaningful experience with Bible truth in his life”;³¹⁴ and J. N. Anderson, a religion professor who also found the refreshing honesty of the conference to be inspiring, but warned of the potential fallout that would come if this candor was released in their classrooms.

I think we have come to quite a unanimous opinion about this matter [Ellen White’s inspiration] among ourselves but the question in my mind, and in the mind of some others, too, I think, is what shall we as teachers do when we stand before our classes and some historical question comes up, such as we have spoken here, where we have decided that Sister White’s writings are not final?... Is it well to let our people in general go on holding to the verbal inspiration of the testimonies? When they do that aren’t we preparing for a crisis that will be very serious some day?³¹⁵

Daniells, Prescott, and most of the other speakers agreed with Anderson that they had come to a wonderful consensus in these meetings, but would have to be very careful about how their conclusions were communicated to the average church member. President Daniells represented the majority view of those delegates willing to voice their opinions at the conference when he provided the following summation. “I think I can truly say that at

the close of this important meeting we stand together more unitedly and firmly for all the fundamentals than when we began the meeting.” The problem for the progressives was that they were completely blind and gullible to the silent opposition that was so offended at the conference. They assumed that they were in a safe, collegial, and confidential environment when the exact opposite was true. Because they were in the minority, and were less informed than those who spoke out, the conservatives who insisted on the verbal inspiration of Ellen White held their peace during the discussions. But they were seething with anger, and couldn’t wait to violate their vows of confidentiality taken at the conference to betray and expose the heretics once the meetings ended.

They were so outraged by the way church leaders had exposed the weaknesses and errors in Mrs. White’s writings that they were hell-bent on revenge. Their hostility and resentment not only escalated after the conference, but spiraled out of control, as they clung to Ellen’s infallibility and sought to fire the “modernist” teachers and administrators in the church. Their witch hunt was led by Dr. B. G. Wilkinson, a union president and member of the Washington Missionary College Board. He, along with M. C. Olsen, called for the removal of two “infidel teachers” whom they accused of spreading false theology. But when the professors in question, H. C. Lacey and C. M. Sorenson, were interviewed and retained, Wilkinson resigned as president of the Columbian Union. But the battle wasn’t over. Two new crusaders took up the mantle of heresy hunting, and they were longtime pioneers J. S. Washburn and Claude Holmes.

These men both published letters or tracts for circulation that attacked the “higher critics” and “conceited philosophers” in the church, and claimed that Ellen was an infallible authority on all subjects, not just theology. When critics responded that they were making a pope out of Ellen White, Holmes quickly answered the charge by asserting that Ellen far surpassed any pope. “She is much more than a pope, because the infallibility of the popes is restricted to questions of faith and does not extend to the natural sciences such as astronomy and geology.”³¹⁶ Washburn’s sixteen-page tract, published the same month, was even more influential and was entitled *The Startling Omega and Its True Geneology*. This publication gloated that the Washington College Board had finally been pressured into firing several of

their key faculty members which Washburn and others had targeted as “heretics.”

The leading victims of the witch hunt were Dr. F. G. Albertsworth, a history professor, who, in Washburn’s words, had turned the college into a “nest of higher criticism.” He also rejoiced that Professor Lacey, who had escaped the first attempt to fire him, had now caught the full rage of Washburn who accused him of teaching that the world had been created for twenty million years, that traditional Adventist views based on Ellen White were unreliable, and several other “heresies.”³¹⁷ He named three specific students who had almost had their faith destroyed at the college, including his own son, and therefore expressed great relief and satisfaction that Albertsworth, Lacey, Sorenson, and J. W. Field had all been removed from the college faculty. In his conclusion, Washburn blamed all the theological problems and doubts about Ellen White on Prescott and Daniells, and condemned them both as being the “instruments” of the “devil.” And another thirty-five-page open letter written by Washburn, identifying Daniells as the great “liar” and “omega heretic,” would be the final blast that was enough to force Daniells out of office in 1922.³¹⁸

With all this occurring, it is not really a surprise that the leaders of the 1919 Bible Conference decided not to publish the minutes from this important meeting. Rather, it was decided that these 2,400 pages of typewritten transcripts should be buried deep in the archives of the General Conference vault. So deep, in fact, that they would become lost and forgotten for more than 55 years. The 1919 Bible Conference became the incredible disappearing conference, and one of the best kept secrets in Adventist denominational history, until it came to light, almost by accident, on December 6, 1974.

The materials were discovered by GC archivist Dr. Donald Yost, who stumbled on these packaged documents responding to a research request made by Donald Mansell, the assistant secretary of the White Estate. He had found a reference³¹⁹ which mentioned a significant Bible Conference held in Takoma Park, Maryland, in July of 1919, and, in spite of his attempts to gain information from old-timers in the church, had learned nothing. After examining the materials, Mansell quickly realized that he had found much more than he ever expected. Ironically, it was the White Estate that was ultimately responsible for uncovering these documents

which revealed how aware church leadership was of the deceptions and plagiarisms of Ellen White right after her death.

Once Daniells and his fellow progressives were out of office, the church entered a long period where conservatives dominated leadership positions. And the myths and falsehoods of Ellen White were perpetuated. Had it not been for the conservatives who betrayed the progressives at the 1919 Conference, the church may have had an opportunity to fess up to the faults and deceptions of its prophet, but more likely these progressives would have continued to hide the facts from church members at large to avoid schism and protect their own jobs. This has been the way of Adventism from its beginnings to the present. The only way to protect a lie and deception is with more lies and deceptions. My own experience trying to change Adventist subculture over thirty-five years of ministry was that there was a powerful “spirit of dishonesty” and deception in the movement which was most prominent at the top, but filtered down through the entire denomination. Adventists place a premium on pretense, approval seeking, and looking good to others. In this regard, they are very much like their Mormon counterparts.

Psychologically, both movements come from the same kind of roots and share the same insecurities. Both movements are built on extremely shaky and deceptive foundations. Both movements owe their existence to a prophet founder who lied, plagiarized, and deceived to gain iconic status and a faithful following—though in the case of Joseph Smith, his cons were less subtle and were exposed with severe consequences. Both movements went through a countercultural period where they were ostracized, persecuted, and scorned by the general public. Because of their deep insecurities, based on illegitimate origins, both movements developed a desperate need for cultural acceptance and approval seeking.

Both movements built large institutions to try to legitimize themselves, and both movements tried to cover up and minimize the importance of their prophet to the public, while continuing to largely function under their prophet’s mandates. Both movements continue to practice a great deal of pretense, dishonesty, and deception. Both movements perfectly fit with the classic definition of a cult and continue to feature many pathologies of their prophet founder. Adventists will protest that the Mormons are clearly a cult, but they are not, based on Walter Martin’s refusal to include SDAs in his

well-known book *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Why this happened is a fascinating study that deserves our brief attention.

In 1949, T. E. Unruh, the president of the East Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, wrote a letter to Donald Grey Barnhouse, editor of *Eternity Magazine*, complimenting him on a powerful radio sermon he preached on the subject of righteousness by faith. Barnhouse replied, expressing great “astonishment” that an Adventist leader would make such statements, given the church’s cultic doctrines that were legalistic, “Satanic and dangerous.”³²⁰ But Unruh sought for continued dialogue and attempted to convince Barnhouse that SDAs were not a cult, sending him a copy of Ellen White’s book *Steps to Christ*. Barnhouse responded by writing a scathing review of the book, calling it “false in all its parts” and condemning its author as the “founder of the cult” of Adventism.³²¹

During this time, Barnhouse’s promising young associate who was considered to be an expert on the cults, Walter Martin, was preparing to publish his book entitled *The Rise of the Cults*, which identified the big five cults as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Christian Science, Unity, and Seventh-Day Adventism. Largely because of Unruh’s correspondence, Martin decided to meet with Unruh and LeRoy Froom, a General Conference officer and SDA seminary professor, before publishing his book. These two men, who happened to be much more evangelical in their views than Adventists in general, with the support of R. R. Figuhr, the most evangelical GC president the church has ever had, went out of their way to convince Martin that SDAs were not a cult. They did so through highly deceptive means which completely misrepresented past and present SDA theology. When Martin challenged their claims by insisting that many of the most prominent volumes in SDA bookstores seemed to contradict their assertions, like the works of M. L. Andreasen and F. D. Nichol, they lied to Martin by insisting that Adventism prized freedom of expression and that these books were only popular with a “lunatic fringe,”³²² when in fact they represented the mainstream of Adventist thinking at the time.

To substantiate their false claims, Froom, Unruh, and Figuhr threw together a committee to publish a new book entitled *Questions on Doctrine*, leaving off all the most influential conservative scholars in the church. The book seemed to impress Martin, so he partially edited his manuscript, but his book was still published identifying SDAs as a cult in several places.

The Adventist leaders who had so skillfully and dishonestly courted Martin felt totally betrayed by the publication, and let Martin know it. He apologized for what he claimed was a misunderstanding and, to try to make it up to these SDA leaders, did not list Adventists as a cult in his next major work *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Ultimately, however, as Martin discovered that he had been deceived, he did refer to Adventists as a cult again and publicly identified Ellen White as a false prophet.³²³ It is also noteworthy that Anthony Hoekema, another famous author on the cults during that time, did not hesitate to list Adventists as one of the four major cults as did many other authors, both before and after him.³²⁴

The scheme to trick Martin ultimately backfired on the SDA leaders who pulled it off, not just because Martin would eventually reverse his position and identify SDAs as a cult again, but because it gave the SDA enemies of Figuhr and his evangelical-leaning supporters the ability to force him out of office in the years that would follow the publication of *Questions on Doctrine*. The book also ceased to be published by SDA publishing houses in 1975, as the conservative forces firmly reestablished power in the church, and the book lost its significance. But the Martin saga did give Adventists the false narrative that they had been declared not to be a cult. Today, in our postmodern age, there are many who would suggest that evangelicals themselves, and even orthodox Christians, are a cult, based on the once nearly universal belief in America that Jesus is Lord. So, the debate about cults has changed, but hopefully there is still a consensus that plagiarism, deception, fraud, and hurting people in the name of God is wrong.

The odds that Adventists will ever fess up to their dishonest past, which perpetuates their dishonest present, are infinitely small. There are far too many people who benefit from the fraud that Ellen accomplished. The system is such that anyone who speaks out simply gets eliminated. And there is no question that if Adventism were to admit its faults, acknowledge the fraud of its prophet, and attempt to right the wrongs, it would be a financial disaster, and no doubt cause a major schism in the church. But this is the cost of integrity. We have a missionary sent out from our church who is an ordained minister in the Worldwide Church of God. This church was an offshoot from the Church of God Seventh Day, which was an offshoot of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. In the 1960s, Herbert Armstrong's World Wide Church of God had a circulation of 7.5 million to its church

magazine, the *Plain Truth*. But in 1997, under new leadership, the denomination decided to shed its Old Covenant and cultic teachings and embrace mainline orthodox Christianity. The move was extremely costly, resulting in the loss of many church assets and a huge schism. However, those who remain in the movement today no longer bear the image of a cult, and experience the joy and fulfillment of New Testament Christianity. So, it can be done.

There is a freedom that comes with honestly owning up to the past, and thereby living with integrity in the present. Ellen could never do this, once she made the decision to enter into her prophetic fraud. The cost would have been too high. Just as the cost is too high today for Adventists to own up to their past. So, instead, Ellen carefully carried out her fraud, and skillfully eliminated those who attempted to expose it. There was a time when I tried to make the argument that Ellen was a victim herself of false and unrealistic expectations, and was generally sincere in her pursuit of God and ministry. But with all the historical evidence that I now have, I must conclude that Ellen was one of the most successful con artists in history, if not the most successful. But that is another book for another time.

Some will conclude that I must hate the Adventist Church to write a book like this one. But nothing would be further from the truth. In spite of the pathology that I grew up with in Adventism, there are still many good and wonderful things that I received from the church. I can also say that I know, and have known, many wonderful people in Adventism. I also believe that Adventist institutions have helped and benefitted multitudes of people in the movement's 175-year existence. But the same can be said for Mormonism. I have also known many wonderful Mormons, and their institutions have also accomplished great things. My wife and I once had a Mormon family renting a house from us, and when they fell on hard times, the church stepped in and paid their full rent for four years. How many churches do that? But this does not make them less of a cult. God is in the business of "overcoming evil with good" (Romans 12:21). But this does not justify or erase the evil, especially evil that is fraudulently imposed on people in His name.

It is my true desire to see the Adventist Church come clean about its past, and make the same kind of courageous decision that the World Wide Church of God made. I do not expect that this will happen, because courage

is not an attribute that has been very common in Adventist history, especially among its leadership. Cover-up is much easier than courage, especially when the cost of change would be so high. So, it is much more likely that SDA Church leadership will continue to trudge on, employing the authority of Ellen to manipulate members as expediency requires, and increasingly ignoring the prophet's mandates as her advancing irrelevance demands. Such is the convenience of leaders who have carefully engineered the death of prophecy.

Questions

1. Based on the evidence presented in this book, is it reasonable to consider the very real possibility that Ellen White was a high-functioning sociopath?
2. Which is more surprising, that Ellen attributed overtly racist teachings to God, or that SDAs have never renounced and denounced these views?
3. What do you make of the queenly, elitist lifestyle Ellen lived, once she attained her matriarchal status, and of the hypocrisy that is contained in her will?
4. What is more disturbing, the fraud and plagiarism of Ellen White, or the continuing cover-up of this fraud and plagiarism by SDA leaders who orchestrated the death of prophecy?

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Empress Has No Clothes

God does nothing in partnership with Satan. My work for the past thirty years bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy. There is no halfway in the matter.

—4T, 230

You think individuals have prejudiced my mind. If I am in this state, I am not fitted to be entrusted with the work of God.

—Ellen White, *Selected Messages*

As we can see from the above statements, Ellen was never willing to compromise the absolute claims she made for her prophetic ministry and authority. She insisted on an “all or nothing” view of her prophetic gift. It is the prophet who demands that we assume there is nothing in her ministry that contaminates her work, or bears “the stamp of the enemy.” If it does, she requires that we must conclude that her works are false and evil. She also contends that if her works can be shown to be influenced or prejudiced by human thoughts, rather than the divine mind alone, then her claims and works are discredited. It is important that she makes these assertions, because I do not seek to set myself up as a judge over the prophetess, but instead she judges herself with her own written words. And the evidence contained in this book, and many other works, which have absolutely established the extensive plagiarism and fraud of the prophet, only serve to confirm her own testimony.

To summarize the findings and conclusions of this volume, I will begin by reminding the reader that Ellen and her fraternal twin, Elizabeth, were the youngest of eight children. Theirs was a busy lower-middle-class family with a strong work ethic that didn’t allow for a whole lot of individual attention for the children. Ellen seemed to struggle with this more than her twin, based on the insecurities and fears she expressed as a child. Her insecurities and fears were compounded by the severe facial and head injury she incurred at the hand of an angry friend who accidentally hit her with a rock when Ellen was nine years old. But the attention from the injury and

the ensuing convalescence and dropping out of school that Ellen experienced allowed her to escape the traditional expectations for female roles at that time, and brought her many benefits that she was consciously or unconsciously able to manipulate. This creative malady, as it is called, would characterize Ellen and surface at various times the rest of her life. The prophetess has been diagnosed with somatization disorder accompanied by histrionic personality disorder and major depressive disorder by one expert in psychology, and while it is not technically ethical to make such a diagnosis on a deceased person, the historical evidence certainly fits with Ellen having many of the symptoms that match these conditions as well as others that I will add later.

Ellen's injury trauma at first led her to extreme depression and even thoughts where she wished to die, but her fear of being unsaved made for a fear of death as well. Eventually, according to Ellen, this fear resulted in a search for God that led her to personally seek out the Lord for herself.

It is in the wake of this experience that Ellen becomes active and even assumes a leadership role, as a teenager, in the very charismatic shouting Methodist movement. The extreme emotionalism that held sway in this offshoot of Methodism led to the kind of trances, visions, and ecstatic experiences that Professor Ann Taves describes in her excellent book covering this subject and this time period.³²⁵ Whatever Ellen experienced in this movement, it would motivate her to assume a future prophetic role in Adventism, but not before she and her family became so active in William Miller's end-of-the-world movement that they were kicked out of the Methodist Church. This action would also have a profound effect on Ellen, and would be grossly misrepresented by her in her later descriptions of what happened.

The Great Disappointment of 1843, and to a greater degree in 1844, when Miller's predictions of the end of the world failed to transpire, contributed even more to Ellen's fragile emotional instability. She describes herself as being on the verge of going insane during this period. The small group of disappointed Millerites who gathered around Ellen at the time of her first professed "vision" were also extremely desperate and emotionally fragile, seeking anything to give them hope in their state of near hopelessness. Much of the content of Ellen's first "vision" was written in a paper presented by Joseph Turner, which Ellen had access to before her

vision, and which Turner claimed was virtually identical to his paper after her vision. This was most likely Ellen's first plagiarism. But when she saw the strong acceptance of her "vision" and the willingness of those adults to believe she was a prophet, it no doubt motivated her to produce further "visions" that would increase her stature in the group.

As Ellen traveled to various Millerite Adventist homes, as a seventeen-year-old, trying to encourage those who had been devastated by the Great Disappointment, she was accompanied by another Millerite named James White, who was more than six years her senior. These two taught that the end of the world was still so close at hand, that there was no time for marriage, and that marriage was a denial of faith. Ironically, Ellen and James would soon be married themselves, despite their preaching to others. This would not be the last time that the young prophetess would hypocritically live in complete contradiction with her own revelations. But the Whites were so poverty-stricken that they desperately needed support. They came up with a clever premeditated plan to deceive Joseph Bates, a wealthy retired sea captain, into believing that Ellen was given a "vision" on astronomy, his favorite subject, and right before his eyes. The con succeeded, Bates was duped, and the three of them would go on to become cofounders of the SDA Church.

Joseph Bates convinced the Whites of his seven-year theory that Christ would return exactly seven years after the Great Disappointment. On and off for seven years, between 1844 and 1851, Ellen would claim to have "visions" showing that probation was closed and the door of mercy had been shut by God to all who were not in their little group—this was called the shut-door doctrine. She also continued to profess that God was revealing to her that the Second Coming was still imminent, and that all the other churches were Babylon. But when their seven-year theory failed to be fulfilled, and Christ did not return on October 22, 1851, the Whites went into a major cover-up mode, where they attempted to deny and remove the evidence of the shut-door teachings. Adventists who protested and tried to expose the Whites and hold them accountable for their deceptions were ostracized and removed from the group.

The Whites and Bates would manage to win the battle over officially organizing the church, establishing its doctrines, and taking the name Seventh-Day Adventist, largely with the aid of Ellen's accompanying

visions. Once these three were established in their leadership roles, the general pattern that emerged was for Joseph Bates and James White to determine the theological and church policy agenda and then for Ellen to be given “visions” that would supernaturally confirm the validity of these directions. The more Ellen was able to sell the legitimacy of her visions, the more emboldened she became. From the early 1860s on, she would engage in ridiculous amounts of plagiarism on numerous subjects and attribute all of this material to “visions” from God. Occasionally, she would be exposed, or even threatened with lawsuits, as was the case with Conybeare and Howson, but she always managed to survive these crises either by backing down as the denomination did with the major publisher, or by destroying those who challenged her within the movement with visions.

After the death of Bates in 1872, and the death of James in 1881, Ellen became the lone remaining founder, the matriarch, continued to be the monolithic prophet, and was now by far the most powerful person in Adventism. Her lavish, extravagant lifestyle, entourage of servants and assistants would be accompanied by life-threatening addiction and gross hypocrisy with regard to her own visions. Throughout all of this, Ellen would continue to plagiarize and make a fortune off the writings of other authors, all while misrepresenting God by attributing what she stole from others to the Almighty.

Ellen clearly demonstrated many behaviors, based on the historical record, which fit with both narcissistic personality disorder and a high-functioning sociopath. What may be most amazing and impressive about her life was that she was able to accomplish so much and gain such a significant following, while engaging in such dishonest, fraudulent, plagiarizing, unethical, and, in some cases, illegal behavior. Despite the repeated problems and dilemmas that plagued Ellen over the last several decades of her life, the fact that she was not only able to survive, but also in many ways to thrive, even for a century after her death where her reputation is concerned, makes her a candidate for possibly the most successful con artist in history. The materials presented in this summary and conclusion are documented throughout the text and 325 references contained in this volume. I strongly encourage the reader to carefully evaluate this material and make your own judgments. As for me, the overwhelming evidence demonstrates that the SDA empress has no clothes.

As I bring this book to a close, it is my hope and prayer that it has been interesting, informative, and helpful in terms of giving insights into how we can better treat each other as human beings.

To those who are not Adventists, I hope it has given you a much greater understanding of Adventism and its fallible prophet. To those who are Adventists, my prayer is that you will weigh the evidence for yourselves, and draw your own conclusions. My journey through Adventism has been a remarkable one, but I must confess that this last decade outside of Adventism has given me a peace, joy, and freedom that I never knew before.³²⁶ I will finish with the words of Jesus that apply to my own experience leaving Adventism, “You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

OTHER BOOKS ON ADVENTISM BY THE AUTHOR

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2. "The Irony of Adventism: Ellen White and Other Adventist Women 1844–1915," Claremont School of Theology doctoral dissertation (1985).
3. *The Essence of Adventism: A Primer to Adventist Belief and Practice* (Portland: Better Living Publications, 1990).
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2. *The Heresies of Jesus: Getting Heretical with Christ* (1996). Available at Graceway Community Church. On Amazon Kindle.
3. *Spiritual ABCs for a New Millennium* (2000). On Amazon Kindle.
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11. *Decoffinated Christianity* (2015). On Amazon Kindle.
12. *Should the Kingdom Confront Globalism* (2016). On Amazon Kindle.
13. *Truth Decay: The Law and Gospel in Galatians* (2017). On Amazon Kindle.
14. *Has Your Reputation Gone to Hell: Spiritual Warfare* (2018). On Amazon Kindle.
15. *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled: Reframing Anger, Anxiety, Addiction and Depression* (2018). On Amazon Kindle.
16. *Challenging Churchianity: Studies in Ephesians* (2018). On Amazon Kindle.
17. *Jesus, My Body and Me: Children's Book* (Portland: Better Living Publications, 1988).

WHAT ADVENTIST LEADERS AND OTHERS HAVE SAID ABOUT THE AUTHOR'S BOOKS

Adventism for a New Generation

A badly needed and creatively expressed discussion of the major issues that young people in our church are facing. Our young people deserve its honesty and its courage.

—Gary Swanson, editor, *Collegiate Quarterly*

One of the biggest issues facing the church today is how we will meet the needs of our younger generations. This book is custom made to address such concerns. You probably won't agree with everything you read, but it challenges us to think, and to re-think, and that is what we need.

—Lynn Mallory, DMin, STD, president, SECC SDAs

I have been through the book in a solid fashion. I am much impressed and joyous of its contents. I quarrel with some of...[its] conclusions, but I am absolutely, unequivocally supportive of the document.

—William Loveless, EdD, senior pastor, LLUC

Adventism for a New Generation is one of those books that demand attention and thought... I recommend this book to pastors, educators, and thought leaders who want a thorough analysis of what "might be" if we fully commit our mission to the work of God.

—V. Bailey Gillespie, PhD, coordinator, VALUEGENESIS Research Project

Steve talks right from his inmost being about the church, its ministry and especially young adult ministry. He leaves you with hope. But, be ready to have your ideas challenged.

—Ted Wick Director of Youth Ministries NAD of SDAs

Steve Daily has written a challenging and thought-provoking book... I found his application of SDA theology to current issues extremely helpful and insightful. [He] writes with the heart of a pastor...and eyes of a prophet.

—Randal Wisbey, DMin

Throughout the book I felt the author was reaching out to people like me and telling us that he wants to be our brother in Christ and to join hands with us in the ongoing work of missions and evangelism... It is the best book I have read explaining Seventh-day Adventism.

—Tony Campolo, PhD, sociologist,
Eastern College

A treasure trove of a book... [It] shines out for its accurate analysis, honesty, heart and Gospel.

—Desmond Ford, PhD, founder, Good News Unlimited

[This] book is an exercise in the spiritual gift of prophecy!

—Don Hawley, author, *Set Free*

Saving Your Marriage without a Counselor

This book contains a wealth of information that is exciting, well researched and of great value to any spouse who will take the time to read it. Given the cultural crisis that faces us, we need more books like this that elevate the priority of putting our kids first, and that value marriage and family in a healthy and balanced manner... *Saving Your Marriage* is powerful, practical, spiritual, and it includes many important insights about counseling and therapy that every potential client should consider. I commend the material in this comprehensive volume and admire the author even when I don't agree with him.

—Dr. Laura Schlessinger, national syndicated talk show host

A power-packed, comprehensive, Christ-centered piece of work. My impression is that it provides the kind of practical insight that will transform many lives and marriages for the kingdom of God. I recommend it wholeheartedly and with enthusiasm.

—Anthony Campolo, PhD, author, sociologist, Eastern College

Any book that gets the endorsement of both Dr. Laura and Tony Campolo has a remarkable appeal and is well worth reading.

—Lee Strobel, best-selling author, *The Case for Christ, Surviving a Spiritual Mismatch in Marriage*

The Prophetic Rift I and II

For a pastor, who has a passion for God and ministry, Steve has an unusual commitment to scholarship and research. His book, *Adventism for a New Generation*, has helped to redefine and reshape the Adventist church for more than a decade now. But, his greatest scholarly achievements have come in the arena of SDA church history. His Master's Thesis in history, *How Readest Thou*, and his doctoral dissertation at Claremont, *The Irony of Adventism*, which both focused on Ellen White, have received high acclaim and are referenced in numerous scholarly works. However, this two volume set combines his commitment to scholarly research with his knack for addressing the most relevant and controversial issues in the most stimulating and insightful manner. It is a huge challenge to present Adventist history in a radically honest context... I believe this challenge has been met in these volumes. I consider them a must read for all who wish to have a well-formed perspective on where we've been.

—Rudy Torres, former senior pastor, Sligo SDA Church

“The Irony of Adventism” (Claremont Dissertation)

Steve Daily is the brightest student that I have ever had.

—Joseph Hough, PhD, dean, Claremont School of Theology;
distinguished faculty member, Claremont, Yale University,
Vanderbilt University, Union Theological Seminary;
president, Union Theological Seminary;
president, Claremont Graduate University

(Hough quoted by Rudy Torres in his foreword to the book *The Prophetic Rift*)

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ENDNOTES

1. Erik Erikson, *Young Man Luther* (1962) and *Gandhi's Truth* (1969). Erikson won the Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction literature for his work on Gandhi in 1970. While these books were my introduction to psychobiographical literature, the field goes back to the first genuine psychobiography, Sigmund Freud's *Leonardo da Vinci* (which was considered to be a very flawed psychobiography). One of the first great examples of this field's utility was Dr. Henry Murray's analysis of Adolf Hitler's personality during the end of World War II. By applying a theory of personality that consisted of twenty psychogenic needs, Dr. Murray presumed Hitler's personality as "counteractive narcissism," and was able to correctly predict the German leader's suicide in the face of his country's defeat. This work by Dr. Murray helped establish personality psychology as a behavioral science. The discipline of psychobiography has developed various methodological guidelines for psychobiographical study. Some of the most prominent are these:

1. The use of prototypical scenes in the life of the subject to serve as a model of their personality pattern
2. The use of a series of indicators of salience, markers such as primacy, frequency, and uniqueness of an event in a life, to identify significant patterns
3. The identification of pregnant metaphors or images that organize autobiographical narratives
4. Logical coherence or consistency as a criterion for adequate psychological interpretations

Scholars untrained in the discipline who do not follow these guidelines continue to produce psychobiographical studies. For more on the history and methods of psychobiography, see *Handbook of Psychobiography* edited by William Todd Schultz (2005); William Runyan's *Life Histories and Psychobiography* (1982); Dan P. McAdams's *Psychobiography and Life Narratives* (1981); and Alan C. Elms's *Uncovering Lives: The Uneasy Alliance of Biography and Psychology* (1994). One of the many psychobiographies that I read in connection with writing this book which was particularly helpful was Robert Anderson's *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon* (1999).

2. See *The Prophetic Rift*, volumes 1 and 2 (2007–2008).

3. Dolores Curran, *Traits of a Healthy Family* (New York: Random House, 1984).

4. Ellen White, *Life Sketches of Ellen White* (Ellen G. White Estate, 1915), 18–19.

5. E. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen White*, 18–19.

6. E. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:9. George Knight, *Meeting Ellen White: A Fresh Look at Her Life, Writings and Major Themes* (Review and Herald Publishing, 1996), 13.

7. E. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:21–26.
8. See EllenWhite.org’s “Answers to Miscellaneous Charges / Were the Founders of Seventh-day Adventism Freemasons?”
9. See www.truthorfables.com/Methodist Church Letter.htm.
10. Michael W. Kraus, PhD, “Under the Influence: Do Genes Influence Personality? A Summary of Recent Advances in the Nature vs. Nurture Debate,” *Psychology Today* (July 11, 2013).
11. See VeryWellMind.com’s “The Big Five Personality Traits: 5 Major Factors of Personality” by Kendra Cherry, medically reviewed by Steven Gans, MD (updated October 19, 2018).
12. See Joseph Bennington-Castro’s “The Mystery of How Identical Twins Develop Different Personalities” (May 9, 2013).
13. E. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:9.
14. E. White, *Life Sketches*, 19:2.
15. George Pickering, *Creative Malady* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1974). I should note that Bernadine Irwin wrote *A Psychohistory of the Young Ellen White: A Founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, as her PhD dissertation at United States University in 1984. This was published in popular form in 1999 under the title *Ellen White We Never Knew You* (Loma Linda: Millennia Publishing Company, 1999). It is primarily an apologetic work that contributed little that was new to Ellen White studies, but did contain some interesting background information on the White family.
16. Delbert H. Hodder, “Visions or Partial-Complex Seizures?” *Evangelica* (November 1981): 30–37.
17. Molleurus Couperus, “The Significance of Ellen White’s Head Injury,” *Adventist Currents*, 1 (June 1985): 17–23.
18. Donald I. Peterson, *Visions or Seizures: Was Ellen White the Victim of Epilepsy?* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1988).
19. I am in the process of writing a book that addresses these concerns titled *Spiritual Identity Theft: Why Most Therapists and Psychiatrists are Guilty of Malpractice!*
20. For a more thorough description of the shouting Methodists and Ellen Harmon’s involvement with them, see Steve Daily’s *The Prophetic Rift: 1840–1900*, volume 1 (Portland: Better Living Publications, 2007), 1–11.
21. E. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:26–28.
22. James White, introduction to the first published edition of Ellen White’s *Experience and Views* (1851).
23. E. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:58.

24. Ronald Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: Ellen G. White and the Origins of Seventh-day Adventist Health Reform*, revised and enlarged edition with a new psychological profile coauthored by Janet S. Numbers (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 202–227.
25. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health*, 212.
26. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health*, 211.
27. Ellen White, *Selected Messages* (1874), 1:74.
See also George Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publ. Assoc., 1999), 64.
28. Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World* (University of Minnesota Press, 1956), reissued 2008 by Pinter & Martin with a foreword by Elliot Aronson.
29. Ellen Harmon's first vision was published initially by Enoch Jacobs in the *Cincinnati Day-Star* on January 24, 1846, then republished by James White on April 6, 1846, in the broadside "To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad." On May 30, 1847, it was published yet again by James White in the pamphlet *A Word to the Little Flock* (available in facsimile form at any Adventist book center).
30. An 1847 letter by Ellen White, quoted in A. L. White's *Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question*, letter 3, Loma Linda University SDA Heritage Room, 49–51.
31. An "all or nothing" view of prophecy is an Old Testament concept that does not apply to the New Testament or post–New Testament gift of prophecy. I have described it another book, *The Prophetic Rift* (Portland: Better Living Publications, 2007), 1:ix–x, 19–20. The best book I have read on this subject is by Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1988).
32. William Miller letter dated November 18, 1844, printed in *Advent Herald* (December 11, 1844), quoted in D. Arthur, *Come Out of Babylon* (Andrews University Library, 1970), 97–99.
33. Arthur, *Come Out of Babylon*, 101.
34. Ellen White, *Life Sketches*, 96.
35. Joshua V. Himes, "Mutual Conference of Adventists at Albany," *Morning Watch* (May 8, 1845): 151.
36. Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 3–4. For more on the backdrop of American culture at this time related to Adventism, two of the best works are (1) Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan Butler, *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991) and (2) Ed Gaustad, ed.,

The Rise of Adventism. See particularly Jonathan Butler's essay "Adventism and the American Experience."

37. Amariah Brigham, "Millerism," *American Journal of Insanity* 1 (January 1845): 247–253.

38. See Ellen White's *Selected Messages*, 2:34–35; *Spiritual Gifts: My Christian Experience, Views and Labors in Connection with the Rise and Progress of the Third Angel's Message* (Battle Creek: James White, 1860), 51,69; and "Responsibilities of a Physician," *Testimonies*, 5:444 and "Biographical Scetch," *Testimonies*, 1:25–26.

39. A. L. White, *Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question* (White Estate: 1982), revised, 13. For more on the shut-door doctrine, see Rolf J. Poehler's *Change in Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang AG, 2000); and Merlin D. Burton's "Shut Door," *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon, eds. (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2013), 1158–1162.

40. For these names and others, see R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publ. Assoc., 1979), 94–95.

41. For these two quotes, see Ellen White's *Manuscript Releases*, 5:93; and *Present Truth*, August 1849, Loma Linda University Library Heritage Room.

42. Ellen White, *Manuscript 11*, 1850, Loma Linda University Library Heritage Room, 3–4.

43. Ellen White quoted by James White in a published broadside *To Those Who Are Receiving the Seal of the Living God* (January 31, 1849).

44. Ellen White's Camden, New York, vision on June 21, 1851.

45. See Ellen White's *Early Writings*, 48, 279–285; *Testimonies to the Church*, 2:430–431; *Sanctified Life*, 7; *SDA Bible Commentary*, 6:1118.

46. Ellen White, *Life Sketches*, 96–97; *Spiritual Gifts*, 4:54. For more on Ellen White and the Sabbath, remnant, mark of the beast, etc., see *Testimonies to the Church*, 5:712; *Early Writings*, 42; *SDA Encyclopedia*, 11:434–435, 772–774.

47. Quoted in R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1979), 86.

48. Ellen White, *Great Controversy*, 463–464, 588; *Early Writings*, 87–88.

49. Ellen White, *Early Writings*, 15. For more on foot washing and promiscuous foot washing in Adventism, see Ron Graybill's "Footwashing and Fanatics," *Insight* (January 2, 1973): 9–13.

50. Gerald Wheeler presents newspaper and photographic evidence that Ellen White wore chains, necklaces, pins, and broaches in "The Historical Basis of Adventist Standards," *Ministry* (October 1989): 10.

51. Dr. Kellogg and Dr. Stewart found James and Ellen White's dietary habits to be quite deplorable given the prophet's strong testimonies against meat eating and particularly unclean foods. Not only did they eat such foods in their home, but also sanctioned the serving of such

foods at church camp meetings, even after the 1863 health reform vision. In one such case, Dr. Kellogg got so angry that he bought up all the forbidden food and insisted that it be thrown away. But ministers entrusted with the responsibility of disposing of the spoils snuck off and ate it themselves, without any rebuke from James or Ellen White (Kellogg recalls this event in a letter to Ballenger dated January 9, 1936). For more on Ellen violating her own dietary testimonies and then denying it, see Ronald Numbers's *Prophetess of Health* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), xxxvi, 42–43, 194.

52. See Ellen White's *Testimonies to the Church*, 3:394; *Testimonies to the Church*, 2:653; and *Testimonies to Ministers*, 307. By far, the best and most exhaustive book written on the life of J. N. Andrews is Gilbert Valentine's 733-page masterpiece, *J. N. Andrews* (Nampa: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2019). It is encouraging to me that Pacific Press would publish an honest work of history such as this. Valentine documents the mean-spirited public rebukes that James published against Andrews, Wagner, Smith (Uriah), and Butler, in every case backed up by the timely visions of Ellen White.

53. Carol Canon, *Never Good Enough* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998). This book hits at the very heart of the Adventist psyche.

54. James White, "The Faith of Jesus," *Review and Herald* 5 (August 1852): 52.

55. James White quoted in George Knight's *Organizing for Mission and Growth* (Review and Herald, 2006), 61. When White turned down the honor of becoming the denomination's first GC president, the position fell to John Byington. The best biography available on Byington is Brian E. Strayer's *John Byington: First General Conference President, Circuit-Rider, Preacher, and Radical Reformer* (Nampa: Pacific Press Publishing Association).

56. James White stated categorically that his wife's visions did not support the Trinitarian creed. See "Mutual Obligation," *Review and Herald* 13 (June 1871): 204. Theologian Erwin Gane who researched the topic of the Trinity in Adventism thoroughly concluded that no Trinitarian declaration by any Adventist leader except Ellen White can be found before 1898. See "The Arian or Anti-Trinitarian Views Presented in Seventh-day Adventist Literature and the Ellen White Answer," Andrews University MA thesis (1963), 65. Ellen White was the first one in Adventism to move toward an orthodox Christology (although her move away from Arianism—the belief that Jesus was a creature—came after her husband's death). However, Adventists as a whole did not make this shift until the twentieth century.

57. Ellen White's quotes in all eleven of these visions are listed with their dates in Steve Daily's *The Prophetic Rift 1840-1900* (Portland: Better Living Publications, 2007), 63–65.

58. See A. N. Seymour's "The Shut Door Sabbatarians" in *The Advent Harbinger and Bible Advocate* (June 3, 1854), 395.

59. See Brother Russell's *Messenger of Truth* (November 2, 1854), 2.

60. For just a small sample of her warnings against reading such books, see Ellen White's *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 92; *Counsels to Teachers*, 389; *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 184; *Testimonies to the Church*, 8:90, 309; *Testimonies to the Church*, 9:68; and *Selected Messages*, 2:351. For a listing of her personal library, see *A Bibliography of Ellen G. White's Private and Office Libraries*, 3rd rev. ed., compiled by Warren H. Johns, Tim Poirier, Ron Graybill, (Ellen G. White Estate, April 1993). This document contains eighty-three pages of references to books that Ellen White collected in her personal library.

61. For more on Ellen White's views on vital force, see Ellen White's *An Appeal to Mothers* (Battle Creek: SDA Publishing Association, 1864). The quote comes from Ellen White's "Words to Christian Mothers On the Subject of Life, Health and Happiness—No. 2," *Health Reformer* 6 (October 1871): 121.

62. Ellen White, *A Solemn Appeal Relative to Solitary Vice and the Abuses and Excesses of the Marriage Relation* (Sacramento: Northwestern Publishing Association, 1870), reprinted 1980, 200. In this larger book and in her smaller *Appeal to Mothers*, published in 1864, Ellen White attributes the insights and views contained in these volumes to visions she had received from God (not to the health reformers who clearly influenced her thinking).

63. Dunham is quoted generously in an article by SDA physician J. A. Tenny, MD, "Vitality VS Drugs" *Health Reformer* 9 (1874):1.

64. See Ronald Numbers's *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen White* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 155–156.

65. Ellen White, *Appeal to Mothers*, 27.

66. Dr. E. P. Miller quoted by Ellen White in *A Solemn Appeal*, 82.

67. "Chastity," an anonymous essay quoting leading sexual authorities, attached to Ellen White's *Appeal to Mothers*, 48.

68. Dr. Miller quoted by Ellen White in *A Solemn Appeal*, 92–93.

69. O. S. Fowler, "Evils and Remedy," quoted by Ellen White in *A Solemn Appeal*, 243.

70. Ellen White, *Christ Object Lessons* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1900), 69.

71. See Ellen White's *Special Testimony for the Battle Creek Church* (Andrews University Ellen White vault, 1869). See also E. M. Cadwallader's *A History of Seventh-day Adventist Education* (1958), 5–8.

72. Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing, 1948 reprint), 4:96, 648–653. See also Daily's *Prophetic Rift*, 1:75–76; Numbers's *Prophetess of Health*, 157–159; and Bull and Lockhart's *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 172–174.

73. See Ellen White's *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing, 1948 reprint), 5:27. See also Bull and Lockhart's *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 318.

74. See Ellen Whites' *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:58. See also "Trial of Elder I. Dammon," *Piscataquis Farmer* (March 7, 1845), reprinted in Frederick Hoyt's "Trial of Elder I. Dammon Reported for the Piscataquis Farmer," *Spectrum* 17, no. 5 (1987): 29–36.

75. See Ellen White's *Early Writings* (1850), 71–87; *Great Controversy*, 588 (the exact date when this paragraph was written, later published in the book, is uncertain); *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:472. With regard to the extensiveness of Ellen White's plagiarism, this has even been conceded by the White Estate. See Warren Johns's *Ellen G. White, Literary Dependence, and Science* (Ellen G. White Estate), 2. He states, "Evidence for literary borrowing can be substantiated in virtually all nine volumes of the (1) *Testimonies for the Church*, in her (2) *Review and Herald* and *Signs of the Times* articles, and in (3) all of the books published during her lifetime. The only exception may be *Early Writings*. At this time, I am not aware of any significant literary borrowing in that work, but it would not be surprising if it should come to light."

76. See chapters 3 through 7 of this book.

77. Psychiatrist Phyllis Greenacre has put this theory forward in her journal article "The Imposter," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 27 (1958): 363–364. Fawn Brodie applied it to Joseph Smith in her classic work *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 418–419. This may also apply to Jemima Wilkinson, the Quaker prophetess, who copied one of her books nearly word for word from a Quaker preacher named Isaac Penington. Ronald Numbers suggests that it may apply to Ellen White in his book *Prophetess of Health*, rev. ed. (1992), 313, because Ellen used so many sources to which many of her readers or audiences could have easily had access. But it should be remembered that at least among Adventists, the reading of non-Adventists was strongly discouraged, and the reading of fictional books condemned. It should be noted that Ellen copied from fictional books as well in her various writings. Fred Veltman thoroughly established this in his eight-year study of how Ellen White copied sources in her book *The Desire of Ages*.

78. Ellen White, "Writing Out the Light on Health Reform," quoted in W. C. White, "Sketches and Memories," 4.

79. Ellen White, "Writing Out the Light on Health Reform," quoted in Ellen White, *Questions and Answers*, 260.

80. The six health reform articles that appeared in the *Review* long before Ellen wrote her health reform vision were James Caleb Jackson's "Which Will You Have, Hoops or Health," *Review and Herald* 22 (October 27, 1863); "Keep Your Teeth Clean" *Review and Herald* 22 (July 28, 1863); Dio Lewis's "How to Prevent Colds," *Review and Herald* 22 (August 4, 1863):75; "Eating When Sick," *Review and Herald* 22 (August 11, 1863): 86–87; "Talks

About Health: A Word to My Fat Friends,” *Review and Herald* 22 (August 25, 1863): 98–99; and W. T. Vail’s “Eating and Sleeping,” *Review and Herald* 22 (December 8, 1863): 11.

81. See Wikipedia’s “True Believer Syndrome.” The following is a brief excerpt: “True-believer syndrome is an informal or rhetorical term used by M. Lamar Keene in his 1976 book *The Psychic Mafia*. Keene used the term to refer to people who continued to believe in a paranormal event or phenomenon even after it had been proven to have been staged. Keene considered it to be a cognitive disorder, and regarded it as being a key factor in the success of many psychic mediums.

82. Lay, quoted in William C. White’s “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen White,” *Review and Herald* 113 (November 24, 1936): 3–4.

83. Ellen White’s letter “To Those Who Are Perplexed Regarding the Testimonies Relating to the Medical Missionary Work” (March 30, 1906).

84. Charles E. Stewart to Ellen White, May 8, 1907, in *A Response to an Urgent Testimony from Mrs. Ellen G. White*.

85. Charles E. Stewart, *A Response to an Urgent Testimony*.

86. Charles E. Stewart, *A Response to an Urgent Testimony*.

87. “Interview between George W. Amadon, Elder A. C. Bourdieu, and Dr. J. H. Kellogg, October 7, 1907,” 33. This notion of plural inspiration to explain Ellen’s plagiarism has also been proposed by even modern Adventist historians such as Richard Schwarz in his response to Numbers’s book *Prophetess of Health*.

88. Herbert A. Wisbey Jr., *Pioneer Prophetess: Jemima Wilkinson, the Publick Universal Friend* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), 32–33. Quoted in Numbers, *Prophetess of Health*, 195.

89. I am not attempting to supply the direct evidence of her plagiarism in this volume for that has already been documented by Ron Numbers, Walter Rea, Fred Veltman, and many others, and all of these authorities on the subject have acknowledged that her copying is way more extensive than anyone has yet been able to fully document.

90. See, Ray Corsini’s *The Dictionary of Psychology* (Taylor & Francis, 2016), 985; and American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th ed. (2000).

91. See R. Knowles, S. McCarthy-Jones, and G. Rowse’s “Grandiose Delusions: A Review and Theoretical Integration of Cognitive and Affective Perspectives,” *Clinical Psychology Review* 31, no. 4 (2011):684–696. See also Wikipedia’s “Grandiose Delusions” for the cat illustration.

92. James White to Enoch Jacobs, October 11, 1845, in “Letter to Brother Jacobs,” *Day Star Extra* (Loma Linda University Library Heritage Room). With regard to the strange

circumstances of their marriage, see Ellen White's *Manuscript Releases*, 5:208; and *Manuscript 131* (1906).

93. James White, *Life Sketches of James and Ellen White* (1888), 126.

94. Lucinda Burdick letter quoted in Miles Grant's *An Examination of Mrs. Ellen White's Visions* (Boston: Advent Christian Publication Society, 1877).

95. Lucinda Burdick letter quoted in Miles Grant's *An Examination of Mrs. Ellen White's Visions* (Boston: Advent Christian Publication Society, 1877).

96. J. N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement: Its Rise and Progress* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1905), 258. For a detailed biography of Loughborough, see Brian E. Strayer's *J. N. Loughborough: The Last of the Adventist Pioneers* (Pacific Press, 2014).

97. Mrs. Truesdail's letter documenting Ellen White's vision in November of 1846 in Topsham, Maine (January 27, 1891).

98. Mrs. Truesdail's letter. Ellen's quote, "The Lord hates all deception, secrecy, and guile," is from *Special Testimonies for Ministers and Workers*, 6:12.

99. For a history of Jupiter and Saturn, see *Cambridge Dictionary of Astronomy* (Cambridge University Press, 2001); *Oxford Astronomy Encyclopedia* (Oxford University Press, 2002). See Wikipedia for a current count of Saturn's moons and Jupiter's moons.

100. James White, *A Word to the Little Flock*, 22. Available in facsimile form at any Adventist book center. SDA historian George Knight has suggested that Joseph Bates was the real founder of Adventism. See his book *Joseph Bates: The Real Founder of Seventh-day Adventism* (Pacific Press, 2004), and it may well be true that the movement would not have survived if the Whites had not duped him into supporting them, but without Ellen's visions, neither Bates nor James White could have carried the movement forward.

101. See Dirk Anderson's "Ellen G. White: Prophet or Profit?" at nonsda.org. Anderson originally decided to start a website on Ellen White as an apologist and longtime defender and devotee of the prophet, and only changed his mind when he was overwhelmed by the evidence he uncovered.

102. See Dirk Anderson's "Ellen G. White: Prophet or Profit?" at nonsda.org.

103. James White to Ellen White, February 18, 1881.

104. In addition to books and trinkets, Ellen and James also sold Adventist charts. Ellen White wrote to her family, "Your father was doing business selling charts and books every moment of the time" (letter 7 to Henry, Edson, and William White, 1863). A dollar in 1862 was worth \$25.42 in 2018 (the consumer price index inflation calculator). Ellen condemned church members who spent money on photography, but James paid \$500 for a single negative that he wanted in 1876 (\$500 then is equal to \$11,000 in 2018). Ellen White to James White, March 24, 1876.

105. See Dirk Anderson's "Ellen G. White: Prophet or Profit?" at nonsda.org.
106. Ellen White, *To Those Who Are Receiving the Seal of the Living God* (January 31, 1849).
107. J. B. Bezzo, *Messenger of Truth* 1, no. 3 (October 19, 1854): 2.
108. Ellen White, *Review and Herald* (November 26, 1857).
109. Ellen White, letter 4 (1859).
110. Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:131.
111. See George Knight's *Walking With Ellen White* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1999), 73. For examples of prophetic reprimands that Ellen laid on James concerning his poor work habits and attitudes, see Ellen White letters 34, 38, 40, and 40a (1874).
112. Ellen White, *Daughters of God* (White Estate, 1998). A compilation of messages from Ellen White especially for women, on page 268.
113. E. White, *Daughters of God*, 270.
114. Ellen White letters to Lucinda Hall in *Daughters of God*, 266–272.
115. Ellen White letters to Lucinda Hall and apology to James in *Daughters of God*, 266–272.
116. Ellen White quoted in Herbert Douglas's *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen White* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1998), 52.
117. I had the privilege of sitting at the feet of both Murray Bowen and his most famous student, James Framo, in my PhD training as a psychologist. For more on Murray's differentiation theory, see,
118. Gerald Wheeler, *James White: Innovator and Overcomer* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Assn, 2003), 97.
119. Ellen White letter concerning marriage, 1885, in *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery* (1900), 14.
120. Ellen White, *Manuscript 34* (1885), "Document File 360A" (White Estate, July 15, 1934).
121. Ellen White, *Counsels Regarding Parenthood*, "Document File 360A" (White Estate), 7.
122. Ellen White, *Manuscript 7* in *Selected Messages*, 2:343.
123. Ellen White opposing marriage between believers and unbelievers in *Adventist Home*, 62–63; opposing early marriage in *Ministry of Health*, 358; condemning significant age difference in marriage in *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery*, 36–37. On Ellen's denials of forbidding marriage, see Ellen White's letter 60, 1900 (White Estate). With regard to cover-up, Ellen's *Manuscript 34* (1885) statements forbidding marriage do not currently appear in the published writings of Ellen White, and have therefore been dismissed by some as illegitimate or inauthentic. But the legitimacy of the testimony is established by the fact that it appears in "Document File 360," which was published by the White Estate on July 15, 1934, and was written by Ellen's son Willie White and D. E. Robinson (EGW's secretary). The authors quote from the testimony as if it were a valid Ellen White testimony.

124. Some examples of these websites are nonsda.org, nonegw.org, and truthorfables.com.

125. Milton Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind: Investigations into the Nature of Belief Systems and Personality Systems* (New York: Basic Books, 1960).

126. Ron Numbers has documented the hypocritical behavior of Ellen White with regard to meat eating and wearing jewelry in his book *Prophetess of Health*. Ellen's addiction to alcohol and vinegar made with alcohol is documented in the following endnote.

127. Ellen White, letter 70, 1911, reproduced in *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 485.

128. Ellen White, letter 9, 1887, in *Manuscript Releases*, 2:143–144.

129. Ellen White's personal diary entry. She found "some strength by taking a little tomato wine," March 3, 1859, *Manuscript 5* (1859). Ellen White's personal diary entry. "We put up one pint of rich grape wine and another pint of currant for the sick one," March 19, 1859, *Manuscript 5* (1859). Her diary also states that she put up a pint of currant wine and grape wine for Brother Benedict, April 15, 1859, *Manuscript 6* (1859). During the same period, Ellen writes in her diary that when she felt sick, "they got me wine and raw egg, which revived my strength some," May 7, 1859, *Manuscript 6* (1859). In 1868, James admitted that Ellen used "domestic wine" when she was sick, James White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 17, 1868. Twenty years later, Daniels wrote, "Brother and Sister White kept wine in their house, and to your certain knowledge used it." See Ellen White's *Testimonies in the Case of Elder E. P. Daniels*, 53–57; letter dated August 1, 1888. Ellen not only drank fruit and vinegar wines, but also, in 1892, Ellen writes about a sleepless night, and regrets not having a strong alcoholic drink in her house at the time: "I felt the need of a strong cordial, but there was nothing in the house but grape juice." Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, 21:114.

130. Ellen White, *Healthful Living*, 237; unpublished testimony (1892).

131. Shouting Methodist meetings typically occurred outdoors in camp meeting settings. These shouters would form rings or circles which would compete with each other and attempt to shout down the Holy Spirit and the presence of God. The meetings were chaotic and a nightmare for speakers who tried to yell over these shouters, in an age with no public-address systems. It was salvation by shouting that drew a great deal of ridicule from mainline churches. For more on this, see Steve Daily's *The Prophetic Rift 1840–1900: How Adventism Has Historically Misunderstood and Misapplied the Prophetic Gift* (Portland: Better Living Publications, 2007), 1–11.

132. Ellen White to Willie White, letter 10, 1859; letter 3, 1860. (They were not published by the White Estate until 2014, when it was forced upon them because the quotes had been leaked out of the vault and put on the Internet.)

133. Ellen White, *Manuscript 1* (1854). (This was not published by the White Estate until 2014, when it was forced upon them because the quotes had been leaked out of the vault and put on the Internet. I was not the one who leaked these quotes.)

134. Ellen White, letter 1, 1857. (This was another quote that was forced into publication.)

135. Ellen White, letter 11, 1853. “To Brother Pierce” can also be found in Arthur White’s *Ellen G. White Biography: The Early Years*, 1:404.

136. See Fred Veltman, *The Desire of Ages Project* (1990), available online in its entirety under this title. On steps to Christ, see, Donald Grey Barnhouse’s “Spiritual Discernment, or How to Read Religious Books,” *Eternity* (June 1950): 9. For more on Ellen White’s schizophrenic condemnation of Sunday worshippers, while she freely copied from them, see Daily’s *Prophetic Rift*, 113; Bull and Lockhart’s *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 196. In 1888, when Ellen was writing *The Great Controversy*, the Blair Bill was before Congress, which was a bill to pass a national Sunday law. Ellen took this occasion to have visions equating Sunday worship with the mark of the beast and condemnation, and seventh-day Sabbath keeping with the seal of God. Ellen revealed that “thousands upon thousands” would be deceived by Sunday pastors and go to perdition simply because they worshipped on a different day from Adventists. I recently met with one of the readers for my book, who I hadn’t seen for years, and asked him if he was still an Adventist. He responded, “No,” and said that it was Ellen’s mass condemnation of Sunday worshippers that had convinced him that she was a false prophet. But her Sunday-law phobias were based on her cultural context, like everything else, and had nothing to do with visions from God. For some of her direct quotes, see *Spiritual Gifts*, 1:111; *Spirit of Prophecy*, 4:424–425; *Great Controversy*, 624; *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:450–451; and *Testimonies*, 6:18.

137. Ellen White, *Gospel Workers*, 395.

138. Ellen White, letter 6, 1881. See also Yvonne D. Anderson’s “The Bible, the Bottle, and the Ballot,” *Adventist Heritage* 7 (August 1982): 38–52.

139. Uriah Smith editorial, *Review and Herald* (April 11, 1882): 1–2.

140. G. I. Butler, *Review and Herald* (April 11, 1882): 3–5.

141. See Ellen White’s to Mary Lyon, letter 14, 1862. “Joking and jesting will not tend to your advancement in the divine life... The nearer you live to God, the greater will be your disrelish of these things. God is displeased with all such hilarity and glee, you are left weak in faith and shorn of your strength.” See also Ellen White’s *Manuscript 8* (1862). “But never should a smile be seen upon the countenance of their parents at any witty remark they may make.” These quotes were also suppressed, but forced into publication in 2014 by the White Estate.

142. While pursuing my specialty in pastoral counseling at the Adventist Seminary in Michigan (Andrews University) under Professor Eldon Chalmers, he conducted numerous studies and a great deal of research showing that Adventists scored much higher on measures of seriousness and soberness on the 16PF Personality Profile than the general population.

143. See John Kearnes’s “Ethical Politics: Adventism and the Case of William Gage” *Adventist Heritage* 5 (summer 1978): 10–12.

144. John Harvey Kellogg quoted in Kearns's "Ethical Politics," 12.
145. Ellen White quoted in Kearns's "Ethical Politics," 14.
146. See Steve Daily's "The All or Nothing Anointing" in *The Prophetic Rift*, ix–xi, and "The Spirit of Prophecy" in *The Prophetic Rift*, 45–47. Adventism's failure to distinguish between an Old Testament and New Testament understanding of the gift of prophecy has been a major problem with regard to Ellen White. See Wayne Grudem's *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1988).
147. Ellen White to Jarvis Munsel, letter 34, 1868. For more on Jarvis Munsel and Ellen White, see letter 12, 1862.
148. Bert Haloviak, *Pioneers, Pantheists, and Progressives: A.F. Ballenger and Divergent Paths to the Sanctuary* (Office of Archives and Statistics, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists). It should be noted that what Haloviak labels as pantheism was denied by many of the SDA leaders, and would more accurately be characterized as immanentism. I have referenced the biographical works on the most prominent leaders in each of these three groups in this book with the exception of Stephen Haskell, so I will recommend his biography here. See Gerald Wheeler's *S. N. Haskell: Adventist Pioneer, Evangelist, Missionary and Editor* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 2017).
149. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 3:492–493.
150. Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, 17:178; see also, 5T, p. 674; SM3, pp. 32, 52.
151. Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, 17:185–186.
152. Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, 17:216.
153. Ellen White, *Sermons and Talks*, 2:159.
154. Ellen White, *1888 Materials*, 1745.
155. Ellen White, "Address to the General Conference, 1909," *Testimonies to the Church*, 9:260–261.
156. See Robert Brinsmead's *Judged by the Gospel: A Review of Adventism* (Fallbrook: Verdict Publications) chapters 3–5, particularly pages 60–63, and endnotes 2, 3, and 8 in chapter 5.
157. Norval Pease, "Justification and Righteousness by Faith in the Seventh-day Adventist Church before 1900," Andrews University research paper, 31.
158. Uriah Smith to Ellen White, February 17, 1890. In addition to this letter, for more details on Smith's account of Waggoner's book meeting and Ellen White's vision relating to it, see also, Smith to W. A. McCutchen, August 8, 1901. Both letters are found in Andrews University Library. Although Smith held to a more conservative theology than I would prefer, I have great respect for the man and strongly recommend his biography by Gary Land, *Uriah Smith: Apologist and Biblical Commentator* (Idaho: Pacific Press, 2015).

159. James White to J. H. Waggoner, quoted in David P. McMahon's *Eliet Joseph Waggoner: The Myth and the Man* (Fallbrook: Verdict Publications, 1979), 53.
160. See G. I. Butler's *The Law in the Book of Galatians: Is It the Moral Law, or Does It Refer to that System of Laws Peculiarly Jewish?* (1886) Loma Linda University Library Heritage Room, 3, 4, 78. The attacks of Butler and Smith against Waggoner were directly tied to Ellen White's vision and rebuke of Waggoner's father, J. H. Waggoner, but the younger Waggoner would ultimately be branded as a divisive force in Adventism like his father. See Woodrow W. Whidden II's *E. J. Waggoner: From the Physician of Good News to Agent of Division* (Nampa: Pacific Press Publishing Association).
161. Ellen G. White to E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, letter 37, 1887. Copies of this letter were sent to President Butler and Uriah Smith by Ellen White.
162. Ellen White, quoted in McMahon's *Eliet Joseph Waggoner: The Myth and the Man*, 71. See also pages 65–70.
163. Ellen White, *Early Writings*, 71; *Testimonies to the Church*, 5:472. For more such quotes, see Ellen White index under "perfect obedience," "perfection," "sinlessness," "character development," "time of trouble," etc.
164. See Ronald Graybill's "How Did Ellen White Choose and Use Historical Sources?" 49–53; and William S. Peterson's "Ellen White's Literary Indebtedness," 76. "Where are Historians Taking the Church?" *Spectrum* 10, no. 3. See also Graeme Bradford's *Adventist Historians Come of Age*, chapter 22.
165. *Hope of Israel* (November 6, 1866), quoted in Dirk Anderson's *Ellen G. White: Prophet or Profit* (nonsda.org). See also Dr. Jack Gent's *Ellen White: The Desirer of Wages* (truthorfables.org).
166. The inflation calculator (online conversion rates), using the rate of US currency and inflation in 1885, says that 15¢ then would be worth \$4.01 in 2019.
167. Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, 17:191.
168. Ellen White, *Southern Watchman* (January 15, 1903).
169. Ellen White, *Testimonies*, 4:390–391.
170. Ellen White to J. H. Waggoner and C. H. Jones, March 7, 1885, letter 15. Released by Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, DC, January 22, 1989. *Manuscript Releases*, 20:48–50.
171. Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, 2:72–95. See also Richard Schwarz's *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1979), 256.
172. For just a couple of the many citations on this, see Ellen White's *Early Writings*, 86–87; *The Great Controversy*, 588. For many more, see Ellen White index under "Pentecostalism." A. T. Jones took the lead in trying to encourage a Holy Spirit revival of the gifts in Adventism. See George Knight's *A. T. Jones: Point Man on Adventism's Charismatic Frontier* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2011).

173. For a sample of the correspondence that occurred between Ellen and many church leaders, see S. N. Haskell to E. G. White; January 4, 1892, March 9, 1893, October 10, 1893, and April 20 and 22, 1894; F. M. Wilcox to D. A. Robinson, March 8, 1894; O. A. Olsen to E. G. White, March 29, 1894. All in White Estate, incoming files.

174. Ellen White to W. W. Prescott, quoted in Gilbert M. Valentine's *The Shaping of Adventism: The Case of W. W. Prescott* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1992).

175. Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 3:257; *Selected Messages*, 1:46.

176. F. D. Clifford, *The Influence of Ellen G. White on Our Work in Australia* (May 1961), Australian Division Archives.

177. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Release 21*, July 10, 1892. Ellen gives the impression in this testimony that she was generally eager to subordinate herself to General Conference leadership, but this was not the case. For an outstanding description of how Ellen related to Presidents Butler, Olsen, Irwin, and Daniells, see Gilbert Valentine's *The Prophet and the Presidents* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 2011).

178. Ellen White, *Manuscript Release 10* (1896), 392.

179. Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 4:96, 653; "Standards of Christian Living" reprinted in *Review* (June 16, 1946), 218–219. See also Numbers's *Prophetess of Health*, 157–159, and Bull and Lockhart's *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 172–174. For a more extensive list of the various activities and practices that Ellen White condemned, see page of this book.

180. *Battle Creek Daily Journal* (May 5, 1893). See also D. C. Matacio's "A Study of the Historical Context of Selected Counsels by Ellen White on the Subject of Sports," Andrews University research paper, Ellen White vault, 2–3.

181. Ellen White, "The Danger in Amusements," "Document File 249," Ellen G. White vault, 2.

182. Quoted in E. M. Cadwallader's *History of Seventh-day Adventist Education* (Lincoln: Union College Press, 1958), 127–128.

183. "Is Mrs. E. G. White a Plagiarist?" *Healdsburg Enterprise* (March 20, 1889). The article acknowledges that the sample of plagiarism cited was small in comparison to what was available. Today we know that Ellen copied from more than twenty-five major sources that she used repeatedly and was highly dependent on, as well as many more lesser-known sources that she plagiarized. Other newspaper articles about Ellen's plagiarism appeared later, covering threatened lawsuits by Conybeare and Howson against Adventist publishing houses for Ellen's plagiarism of their book, *The Life and Epistles of the Apostle Paul*, one of the major sources Ellen copied from very extensively. I have chosen not to include line-by-line examples of Ellen's extensive plagiarism in this book because they are available in the works of Ronald Numbers, Walter Rea, Fred Veltmann, and many other authors including the online works of Dirk Anderson. Anderson recently published an article online entitled "The Great Thief," in

which he documented page after page of Ellen's copying from John Harris's book *The Great Teacher*, which she plagiarized from repeatedly for over thirty years.

184. Warren Johns, *Ellen G. White, Literary Dependence, and Science*, Ellen G. White Estate, 2. Johns obviously wasn't aware of the Joseph Turner plagiarism connected to Ellen's first vision in *Early Writings*, or he would have included this book along with the others.

185. See Ellen White's *Selected Messages*, 3:462–463. See also Ellen White to George Irwin, April 23, 1900, letter 61-a, 3; and Marian Davis to William C. White, March 29, 1893, 24.

186. William C. White and Dores E. Robinson, *Brief Statements Regarding the Writings of Ellen G. White* (St. Helena: Elmshaven Office, August 1933), 16, quoted in Alice Elizabeth Gregg's "Marian the 'Bookmaker': Part 2 of 'The Unfinished Story of Fannie Bolton and Marian Davis,'" *Adventist Currents* (October 1983).

187. Robert W. Olson, "How the *Desire of Ages* Was Written," Ellen G. White Estate (May 23, 1979). Ellen White to Mary White, March 1889, letter 64-a, 22.

188. Dudley M. Canright, *Life of Mrs. E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet: Her False Claims Refuted* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1919), 204.

189. Charles E. Stewart, *A Response to an Urgent Testimony from Mrs. Ellen G. White, Concerning Contradictions, Inconsistencies and Other Errors in Her Writings*, 81.

190. *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, compiled by the Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, DC, General Conference of SDA (1982). Fannie Bolton to Mrs. E. C. Slawson, December 30, 1914, 108–109.

191. William C. White and Dores E. Robinson, *The Work of Mrs. E. G. White's Editors* (St. Helena: Elmshaven Office, August 30, 1933), 3.

192. There is no more scholarly and comprehensive examination of these aspects of religious experience during this period in American history than what Taves has provided. See Ann Taves's *Fits, Trances and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999).

193. Alice Elizabeth Gregg, "Fannie's Folly: Part 1 of 'The Unfinished Story of Fannie Bolton and Marian Davis,'" *Adventist Currents* (October 1983), 1.

194. Ellen White to Stephen N. Haskell and Mr. and Mrs. William Ings, February 13, 1888, letter 25, 1.

195. William C. White and Dores E. Robinson, *The Work of Mrs. E. G. White's Editors*, 3.

196. Ellen White to her children, August 2, 1896, letter 154, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 72–73.

197. Marian Davis and Fannie Bolton quoted in Edward S. Ballenger, ed., *The Gathering Call* (February 1932), 16–22, quoted from *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*.

198. Marian Davis and Fannie Bolton quoted in Edward S. Ballenger, ed., *The Gathering Call* (February 1932), 16–22, quoted from *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*.
199. Hugh Williams taped interview, June 18, 1980, in Alice Elizabeth Gregg’s “Fannie’s Folly: Part 1 of ‘The Unfinished Story of Fannie Bolton and Marian Davis,’” 1–2.
200. Fannie Bolton, “A Confession Concerning the Testimony of Jesus” (circa April 1901), 102.
201. Fannie Bolton, “A Confession Concerning the Testimony of Jesus.”
202. Fannie Bolton to Ellen White, February 9, 1894, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 32–33.
203. Ellen White to Fannie Bolton, April 11, 1897, letter 25, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 74.
204. See Ellen White to Marian Davis, October 29, 1895, letter 102, 44. See also Ellen White to John Harvey Kellogg, December 20, 1895, letter 106, 60. Page numbers are from *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*. Both letters refer to Fannie being demon possessed. Ellen makes many other references to Fannie and demons, including calling her demon controlled.
205. Ellen White to Fannie Bolton, February 6, 1894, letter 7, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 27.
206. Statement from Ellen White to Merritt Kellogg, 1896, documented statement by Merritt G. Kellogg (March 1908).
207. Statement by Fannie Bolton to Merritt Kellogg, 1896, documented statement by Merritt G. Kellogg (March 1908).
208. Ellen White to Fannie Bolton, February 1894, letter 7, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 20.
209. Fannie Bolton to Ellen White, April 30, 1891, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 2–3.
210. George B. Starr, “The Watchcare of Jesus over the Writings Connected with the Testimony of Jesus” (June 2, 1915), quoted in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 110. See also Ellen White to Marian Davis, October 29, 1895, letter 102, 42.
211. Ellen White to Fannie Bolton, February 6, 1894, letter 7, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 20–27.
212. Ellen White to Ole A. Olsen, February 5, 1894, letter 59, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 19–20.
213. Ellen White to Willie White, February 6, 1894, letter 88, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 29, 32.

214. Ellen White to Marian Davis, October 29, 1895, letter 102, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 44.
215. Fannie Bolton to Ellen White, February 9, 1894, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 32–33.
216. Ellen White to Fannie Bolton, February 10, 1894, letter 6, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 34.
217. William C. White to J. Edson White, October 25, 1895, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 41.
218. John Harvey Kellogg to Edward S. Ballenger, January 9, 1936, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 120. See also Alice Elizabeth Gregg’s “Fannie’s Folly: Part 1 of ‘The Unfinished Story of Fannie Bolton and Marian Davis.’”
219. Ellen White to Marian Davis, November 12, 1895, letter 103; follow-up letter on November 29, 1895, letter 22-a, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 49, 53–54.
220. Ellen White to President I. N. Williams, April 12, 1896, letter 104, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 70.
221. Ellen White to Fannie Bolton, November 26, 1895, letter 115, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 52–53.
222. Ellen White to John Harvey Kellogg, December 20, 1895, letter 106, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 60.
223. Ellen White to Mr. And Mrs. George C. Tenney, July 1, 1897, letter 114, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 79–80.
224. Ellen White to Willard A. Colcord, January 7, 1896, letter 21, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 62.
225. Ellen White to Kellogg, December 20, 1895, letter 106, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 60.
226. Ellen White to Willard Colcord, January 7, 1896, letter 21, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 62.
227. After Fannie’s health was broken, she continued to have suitors and a proposal for marriage, but her health and past bad experiences with romance led her to reject any further romantic relationships. For more on this, see Hattie L. Porter to William A. Spicer, July 25, 1933, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 117–118.
228. Alice Elizabeth Gregg, “Fannie’s Folly: Part 1 of ‘The Unfinished Story of Fannie Bolton and Marian Davis.’”
229. Fannie Bolton to Ellen White, July 5, 1897, quoting from Ellen White’s *Manuscript 12-c* (April 1, 1896); in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 85.

230. Ellen White to Fannie Bolton, April 11, 1897, letter 25, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 74.
231. Ellen White to Tenney, July 5, 1897, letter 115, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 80.
232. Fannie Bolton to Ellen White, July 5, 1897, in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 81.
233. Marian's quote about Ellen's "terrible plagiarism" is found in Dudley M. Canright's *Life of Mrs. E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet: Her False Claims Refuted*, 204. Marian's quote that she was "crying herself to sleep night after night" is found in Edward S. Ballenger's *The Gathering Call*, 16–22. Quoted in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 113–116.
234. According to Canright in *Life of Mrs. E. G. White*, "it is said that before her death Miss Davis was greatly troubled over the connection she had had with Mrs. White's plagiarism, for she knew how extensively it had been carried on." The source for Ellen's letters to Marian is Ellen White's *Selected Messages*, 2:251–254.
235. Ellen White's *Selected Messages*, 2:251–254.
236. Alice Elizabeth Gregg's "Marian the 'Bookmaker': Part 2 of 'The Unfinished Story of Fannie Bolton and Marian Davis.'"
237. Fannie Bolton, "A Confession" (circa April 1901), *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, 106.
238. As late as 1914, Fannie wrote, "I was with Mrs. White for seven and a half years like a soul on a rock, because of all kinds of inconsistencies, injustices and chicaneries." She continued to be conflicted long after her confession was issued in 1901.
239. Daniells was outspoken in his criticisms of those who held to a verbal inspiration view of Ellen White's writings at the 1919 Bible Conference and was candid about her plagiarism, but kept quiet on these topics while she lived, for reasons that were obviously political. See Steve Daily's *How Readest Thou*, Loma Linda University MA thesis (1982), 9–29.
240. For further elaboration on Ellen White's address, see Richard Schwarz's *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1979), 276.
241. Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 6:411; and *Testimonies to the Church*, 5:439.
242. See George Howe Colt's *Brothers: What the Van Goghs, Booths, Marxes, Kelloggs—and Colts—Tell Us About How Siblings Shape Our Lives and History* (New York: Scribner, 2014), 111–112.
243. "Kellogg, John Harvey," *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed., *Encyclopedia.com.*, July 12, 2019.
244. See chapter 7, "Onanism and Animalism."

245. Ellen White, "Words to Christian Mothers, Part 2," *Health Reformer* 6 (October 1871), 121.
246. See Donald Kennon's *A Knit of Identity: Marriage and Reform in Mid-Victorian America*, University of Maryland PhD dissertation (1981), 138. See also Ronald Numbers's *Prophetess of Health*, 149–150.
247. Ellen White, "Female Modesty," in *A Solemn Appeal*, 149. See also pages 147–157.
248. Ellen White, "Words to Christian Mothers," *Health Reformer* 6, no. 1 (1871): 90.
249. John Harvey Kellogg, *Social Purity* (Battle Creek: Good Health, 1892), 55–57.
250. Hugh Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," *Playboy* 11 (1964): 29–39, 111–115.
251. Kellogg, *Social Purity*, 55–57.
252. On pure thoughts, see Kellogg's *Social Purity*, 6–42, 54. On masturbation, see, J. H. Kellogg's *Plaine Facts for Old and Young* (Battle Creek: Health Library Assoc., 1901), 158–159, 267–268, and 592. See also *Index to the Writings of E. G. White*, vol. 3, entry under "secret vice."
253. For a more complete list of the activities Ellen White condemned in her writings, see Steve Daily's *The Prophetic Rift 1840–1900*, 52.
254. Kellogg, *Social Purity*, 24, 27, 57.
255. J. H. Kellogg, *Plaine Facts for Old and Young* (Battle Creek: Health Library Assoc., 1901), 170–173, 194–195.
256. J. H. Kellogg, *Plaine Facts for Old and Young*, 170–173, 124–134, 194–195.
257. J. H. Kellogg, *Plaine Facts for Old and Young*, 85. See also pages 81–85, 112.
258. J. H. Kellogg, *Plaine Facts for Old and Young*, 97–123, 320–344. See also Wikipedia's "John Harvey Kellogg."
259. J. H. Kellogg, *Plaine Facts for Old and Young*, 117. See also pages 117–123, 99–101, 342–344.
260. Howard Markel, *The Kelloggs: The Battling Brothers of Battle Creek* (Pantheon Press, 2017). See also Wikipedia's "John Harvey Kellogg."
261. For more details on Kellogg and his sexual views see Daily's "The Irony of Adventism," Claremont doctoral dissertation (1985), 135–146. There is an interesting psychobiography on Sigmund Freud which suggests that his obsession with sex was largely related to his own sexual frustrations born out of a marriage where his wife's health prevented him from experiencing normal sexual practice. See, Alan C. Elms's *Uncovering Lives: The Uneasy Alliance of Biography and Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 35–50.
262. Ellen White, *An Appeal to Mothers: The Great Cause of the Physical, Mental and Moral Ruin of Many Children of Our Time* (Battle Creek: SDA Publ. Assoc., 1864), 11.
263. Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 119.
264. Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 5:439.

265. See Richard W. Schwarz's "John Harvey Kellogg: American Health Reformer," University of Michigan PhD dissertation (1964), 349. His most recent work on Kellogg is *John Harvey Kellogg: Pioneering Health Reformer* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 2006).
266. J. H. Kellogg to Ellen White, June 28, 1898, in Richard Schwarz's "The Kellogg Schism: The Hidden Issues, *Spectrum* 4, no. 4 (1972): 24.
267. See Ellen White's *Counsels on Health*, 558; *Evangelism*, 53; *Messages to Young People*, 224.
268. Ellen White, *Gospel Workers*, 63; *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:411.
269. For a list of the health reformers Ellen plagiarized from, see Ronald Numbers's *Prophetess of Health*. See also pages of this volume.
270. "Interview with J.H. Kellogg," in *Spectrum* 20, no. 3: 58.
271. For a detailed comparison of Ellen's *How to Live* and Coles's *Philosophy of Health*, see "Ellen White's Health Plagiarisms: Evidence Ellen White Copied from L. B. Coles and Others," compiled by Dirk Anderson.
272. Canright's books, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced* and *Life of Ellen White* (see chapter 11, with reference to this chapter) are both still available today on Amazon.com.
273. Dr. Jack Gent, *The Desirer of Wages* (truthorfables.org).
274. J. H. Kellogg, *An Authentic Interview with E. W. Amadon and A. C. Bordeau*, stenographic report by J. T. Casco (October 7, 1907), section entitled "The \$5,000."
275. This statement is quoted by W. C. White in a letter to A. G. Daniells, December 20, 1906, JHKC, Heritage Room, Andrews University.
276. J. H. Kellogg, *An Authentic Interview*, 94–95.
277. J. H. Kellogg to G. I. Butler, May 12, 1905, JHKC (John Harvey Kellogg Correspondence).
278. J. H. Kellogg, *An Authentic Interview*, 24–25.
279. J. H. Kellogg, *An Authentic Interview*, 62–63.
280. J. H. Kellogg, *An Authentic Interview*, 42–43.
281. J. H. Kellogg, *An Authentic Interview*, 58.
282. J. H. Kellogg, *An Authentic Interview*, 81–82.
283. J. H. Kellogg, *An Authentic Interview*, 92–93.
284. See Aage Rendalen's "Mrs. White Versus the Facts: John Harvey Kellogg's Concept of Ellen White's Inspiration," Andrews University research paper, Ellen White vault (1979), 7.
285. Charles E. Stewart, *A Response to an Urgent Testimony*.
286. See Dudley Canright's *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1889); *Life of Mrs. E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet: Her False Claims Refuted* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1919).

287. Robert D. Anderson, *Inside the Mind Of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999).

288. The narcissistic personality is generally considered to be the severest form of character pathology that may not have a genetic component and that is potentially treatable. This definition and the nine points in italics which follow come from “Diagnostic Criteria for 301.81 Narcissistic Disorder,” *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994), 661.

289. In addition to many of these traits which can be found in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* related to sociopathy, for more on high-functioning sociopaths, see also Paul Sorensen’s *Sociopath: Inside the Mind of a Sociopath* (2014) and Martha Stout’s *The Sociopath Next Door* (2006).

290. John G. Turner, “Why Race Is Still a Problem for the Mormons” *New York Times* (August 18, 2012).

291. Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 3:64.

292. See “Ellen White’s Plagiarism of Apocrypha and Fiction,” compiled by Dirk Anderson. See specifically “Book of Jasher,” available at nonsda.org where parallels between the Book of Jasher and Ellen White’s writings are listed.

293. Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 3:75. For more on the whole subject of Ellen White and race relations, see Ron Graybill’s *Ellen G. White and Church Race Relations* (Amazon, 1970).

294. James White, *Review and Herald*, August 15, 1868.

295. Because Marsh convinced SDA leaders at the 1947 meeting that amalgamation between man and beast was biologically impossible, both Marsh and Nichol attempted to construe alternative explanations for her statements that conflicted with both the context of what she wrote and basic reason. Nichol devoted twelve pages to these strained arguments (306–317) in his famous apologist work *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publ. Assoc., 1951). This book was published with the endorsement of the General Conference leaders (13–14). Marsh became one of the first homegrown SDA “scientists” who attempted to prove Ellen White’s “scientific testimonies” to be true. Not only did he defend her on amalgamation (see “Amalgamation of Man and Beast: What Did Ellen White Mean?” *Spectrum* [June 1982]: 14), but also, he was a radical creationist defending her statements that the earth was only six thousand years old. See Frank Marsh’s books, *Evolution, Creation, Science* (1947) and *Studies in Creationism* (1950). The best book on the history of the creationism movement is Ronald Numbers’s *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*, expanded edition (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006). For more on the impact of fundamentalism in American history and culture see Bruce Lawrence’s *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age* (University of South Carolina Press, 2007).

296. Ellen White, *Manuscript 7*, 1896; *Selected Messages* 2:343.

297. Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 5:67.

298. Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4:145.

299. For example, in my book *The Prophetic Rift* volume 2, pages 16, 81, I compare Ellen White favorably to Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell, and Margaret Rowen. I argued that while Ellen was self-deceived, she was not a fraud and con artist in the sense that these others were. But historical evidence which has surfaced over the last ten years has convinced me that Ellen did engage in premeditated fraud and deception to a degree that made her one of the most sophisticated con artists in history.

300. Rowen forgery as quoted in Martin Gardner's "Seventh-day Adventists and the Second Coming: The Incredible Flimflams of Margaret Rowen," unpublished research paper available through the online research site www.highbeam.com. Other sources I have drawn on for the information on Rowen in this chapter include Lowell Tarling's *The Edges of Adventism* (Barragga Bay: Galilee Publications, 1981), 88–99; and Larry White's "Margaret W. Rowen: Prophetess of Reform and Doom," *Adventist Heritage* 6, no. 1 (1979): 28–40.

301. This information comes from an unpublished paper presented by Arthur White to a conference of Adventist leaders in Tacoma Park, Maryland, in 1973, entitled "Margaret Rowen," quoted in Gardner's "Seventh-day Adventists and the Second Coming: The Incredible Flimflams of Margaret Rowen," p.3.

302. We already noted that financial mismanagement was an early accusation against the Whites by Case and Russell and the Messenger Party, but other examples of such attacks include E. S. Ballenger's *Mrs. White and Royalties*, D. M. Canright's *The Life of Ellen White* (chapter 11), Dr. Jack Gent's *The Desirer of Wages*, and Dirk Anderson's "Prophet or Profit." All these materials are available online by title and author.

303. Gerald Wheeler, *James White: Innovator and Overcomer* (Review and Herald Publishing Assn, 2003), 97.

304. Gerald Wheeler, *James White: Innovator and Overcomer*, 97.

305. See Dirk Anderson's "Ellen White: Prophet or Profit?" posted on nonsda.org. Some will argue that anything posted on this website can't be objective, but the truth is that Dirk Anderson is a very honest formerly conservative Adventist who delved into EGW research to defend the prophet and prove that accusations against her were false. What he found in his research changed his mind.

306. See Ellen White, letter 16, 1882; and J. H. Kellogg to E. S. Ballenger, January 9, 1936.

307. Ellen White to James White, March 24, 1876, letter 1a, 1.

308. Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 4:482–483.

309. For an example of this, see *The Conference Connection*, published by the Indiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, dated October 1995, vol. 4, issue 4. See also Robert

Sanders's "Ellen G White's Will and Debts" which includes Ellen's last will and testament in its entirety, published on his website www.truthorfables.com.

310. Ellen White, *Councils on Diets and Foods*, 393.

311. Ellen White, *Manuscript 11* (1899), General Conference Archives, Record Group 11, Special Testimonies File. See also *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1946). 30–33, 44–45.

312. Ellen White, *Manuscript Release 760* (Washington, DC: Ellen White Estate, 1905), 4, 10, 19.

313. Quoted in Desmond Ford's *Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment* (Casselberry: Evangelion Press, 1980). A significant portion of Prescott's letter is reproduced in Ford's book on page A-224. For an excellent biography of Prescott's life, see, Gilbert Valentine's *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 2005).

314. C. Lacey's "Discussion and Testimonies Following Presentation on Matthew 24," July 18, 1919, unpublished minutes from the 1919 Conference, Heritage Room, Loma Linda University, La Sierra Campus Library, 1079.

315. J. N. Anderson, "Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy," *Stenographic Report of the 1919 Bible Conference*, August 1, 1919, 3–4.

316. Claude Holmes, "Have We an Infallible 'Spirit of Prophecy'?" (April 1, 1920), 8, 10.

317. J. S. Washburn, *The Startling Omega and Its True Genealogy* (Philadelphia: 5318 Chancellor Street, 1920), 1, 6.

318. J. S. Wahburn, "Open Letter," 13, 15, 26, 27. The influence of Daniells on Adventism may have been greater than any other GC president, and while he had his tensions with Ellen White, he managed to survive her general intolerance for rival leaders better than most. For a comprehensive biography of Daniells, see Benjamin McArthur's *A. G. Daniells: Shaper of Twentieth-Century Adventism* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 2016).

319. The reference was an article by A. G. Daniells entitled "The Bible Conference" *Review and Herald* 96 (August 21, 1919): 3–4. A small portion of the material in this chapter is taken directly or indirectly from my master's thesis in history entitled, "How Readest Thou: The Higher Criticism Debate in Protestant America and Its Relationship to Seventh-day Adventism and the Writings of Ellen G. White, 1885–1925," Loma Linda University (1982).

320. Unruh-Barnhouse Correspondence," quoted in Juhyeok (Julius) Nam's "Reactions to the Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences and 'Questions on Doctrine' 1955-1971," PhD dissertation (UMI, 2005), 48.

321. Donald Grey Barnhouse, "Spiritual Discernment, or How to Read Religious Books," *Eternity* (June 1950), 9.

322. Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Eternity* (September 1956), 7, quoted in Graeme Bradford, *More Than a Prophet* (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 2006), 186.

323. See John Ankerberg Show's "Christianity versus Seventh-day Adventism." Walter Martin debates against William Johnson over the prophetic standing of Ellen White. Martin concludes EGW is a false prophet. Available on YouTube—SkySplash (October 19, 2007).

324. See Anthony A. Hoekema's *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism and Seventh-day Adventism* (William B. Eerdmans' Publishing Co., 1986). Before Hoekema, Russell P. Spittler, a Harvard PhD, wrote his classic work on the cults which also implicated Adventism as a cult. See *CULTS and ISMS* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975). See also Ruth Tucker's *Another Gospel: Cults, Alternative Religions, and the New Age* (1989), which also includes a whole section on Seventh-day Adventism as a cult. See also Kenneth Boa's *Cults, World Religions and the Occult* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1990); and Dale Ratzlaff and Kenneth Samples's *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-Day Adventists: An Evangelical Resource and an Appeal to Adventists* (Life Assurance Ministries, 2009). Several other encyclopedias and dictionaries of religions and cults list Seventh-Day Adventists as a cult as well. Other authorities recognize Adventists as being unorthodox, unbiblical, and having cultic doctrines, without labeling them as an outright cult. See H. Wayne House's *Charts of Cults, Sects and Religious Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000); *The Evangelical Dictionary of World Religions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018); and Bruce B. Lawrence's *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Religions Online* (Indianapolis: Alpha Books, 2000).

325. Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James*.

326. I am currently writing a book entitled *Why I Left Adventism*, but for the last ten years, I have been very happy working as a psychologist for UCLA and pastoring a nondenominational church, GraceWay Community Church, in Riverside, California. For more on why I left La Sierra University, formerly Loma Linda University, see Steve Daily's *The Prophetic Rift II: How Adventism Has Historically Misunderstood and Misapplied the Prophetic Gift 1900-2000*, 134–151.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Daily is a licensed psychologist and church historian who taught for twenty-four years (1980–2004) at Loma Linda University and La Sierra University (Riverside) in the fields of religion, church history, and psychology. For the past ten years, he has worked in the employ of UCLA as a psychologist and addiction treatment specialist. His master’s thesis in history (Loma Linda University) and doctoral dissertations in church history (Claremont) and psychology (Alliant University) all focused on Ellen White and Seventh-Day Adventism. He is the founder of the KEYS Family Resource Center, as well as GraceWay Community Church, in Riverside, California. He has been married to his beloved wife, Erlys, for forty-five years, and they have three children, Lindsay, Justin, and Stevanie, and six precious grandchildren, Aubrey, Cadence, Peter, Lucy, Wes, and Ruth.