

WILLIAM CLARENCE (W.C.) WHITE: HIS RELATIONSHIP TO ELLEN G. WHITE AND HER WORK

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The Topic

William Clarence White (1854-1937), third son of Seventh-day Adventist founders James and Ellen G. White, was for 34 years his mother's counselor, editor, and spokesman. He was alleged by some to stand in a manipulative relationship to his mother and her work, a charge they both denied.

The Purpose

The purpose of the study is to describe, analyze, and evaluate W. C. White's relationship to his mother and her work during her lifetime. This purpose required the development of a partial biographical sketch of White as a context for understanding his relationship to his mother.

The Sources

This is a documentary study based on published and unpublished primary sources. Secondary sources were used for background, context, and perspective. The most heavily used primary sources were the correspondence collections of the Ellen G. White Estate and other Seventh-day Adventist archives.

Conclusions

The relationship between Ellen G. White and W. C. White was a partnership in which her influence on him was prior and predominant. Throughout his life she was his chief mentor. His willingness to be taught by her was the reason she trusted him so completely during her last years. The limit of her influence over him was her insistence that his ultimate accountability was not to her, but to God. She expected him to voice his convictions, even if they disagreed with hers. Though he sometimes persuaded her to a change of course, investigation of instances in which he was alleged to have manipulated her reveals no conclusive evidence that he did so. He appears to have consistently acted within the parameters of her expectations of him.