

The Bible and the French Revolution

AN ANSWER

55

JOHN W. WOOD

The question I wish to raise is this: Do these historians have any attitude or bias in common which might explain why Ellen White was attracted to them? With these words William S. Peterson lays the basis for his recent article, "A Textual and Historical Study of Ellen G. White's Account of the French Revolution."¹

I wish to examine some of the data given by Peterson and test the validity of his tentative conclusions. I will proceed on two levels: *First*, are there indeed any common biases in the works cited, and do these represent Mrs. White's common attitudes with these authors? *Second*, and more importantly, are the *a priori* assumptions of Peterson's work valid — that is, did Mrs. White choose her authorities in such a way as to make her choices a valid basis for textual studies?

I

The Peterson article points out that there are nine works cited in the 1911 chapter of *The Great Controversy* under examination. I have listed them in my references, and the reader should note carefully the differences between this list and Peterson's.²

WALTER SCOTT

The work of the first author, *The Life of Buonaparte*, by Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), is quoted in several places in the center section of Ellen

White's chapter. It is true that Scott was not *primarily* a historian but an author of popular historical novels. However, he did write other histories, and his name made them unusually successful. Peterson says:

In a one-year period Scott was able to produce the massive nine-volume work (printed in small type), thereby earning for himself 18,000 pounds. His secretary, then an inexperienced young man, later described how he and Scott both wrote for twelve hours every day in the latter's library, even eating meals at their desks to save time. Occasionally Scott's writing hand would tire, and he would then dictate rapidly to his companion, hardly interrupting the flow of words as he plucked various books from the shelves.³

56

The evidence cited for this statement is J. G. Lockhart's *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott*.⁴ Lockhart was also a littérateur, specializing in biographies. He himself had written a life of Napoleon. His interest in Scott was largely due to the fact that he was Sir Walter's son-in-law and had worked with him for a time.

The picture of the method of Scott's production of his *Napoleon* is not faithfully transmitted by Peterson. The young man who allegedly worked (wrote!) for twelve hours a day, even gulping down meals at his desk, was not Lockhart himself, but one Robert Hogg, employed by a publishing firm in which Sir Walter held the controlling interest. In 1833 Hogg wrote Lockhart, at the latter's request, to record something of the production of *Napoleon*. This letter, dated February 16, 1833, said: "Having been for a few days employed by Sir Walter Scott, when he was finishing his *Life of Buonaparte*, to copy papers connected with that work, and to write occasionally to his dictation, it may perhaps be in my power to mention some circumstances relative to Sir Walter's habits of composition."

Thus, Hogg worked with Scott as a copyist for only the last few days of the job. He said of the first day: "I was punctual, and found Sir Walter already busy writing. He appointed my tasks, and again sat down at his own desk. We continued to write during the regular work hours till six o'clock in the evening, without interruption, except to take breakfast and dinner, which were served in the room beside us, so that no time was lost; — we rose from our desks when everything was ready, and resumed our labors when the meals were over. I need not tell you that during these intervals Sir Walter conversed with me as if I had been on a level of perfect equality with himself."

So the "inexperienced young man" was really a professional copyist. Instead of writing for twelve hours a day, for months, even eating at his desk, he was employed for a few days as a copyist. As the full statement shows,

the two men did not at all gulp down food at their desks, but retired to the dining room of Sir Walter's country estate, Abbotsford.

Hogg continued: "Once or twice he desired me to relieve him, and dictated while I wrote with as much rapidity as I was able. . . . His thoughts flowed easily and felicitously, without any difficulty to lay hold of them, or to find appropriate language."⁵ Rather than taking dictation every day for months, Hogg actually took dictation "once or twice." The reason for this is clear if one reads the full account of Scott's life at this time. He was seriously hampered by what seems to have been arthritis or neuritis, and it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to write for long periods.

Lockhart followed this recitation with the observation that "two years had elapsed since Scott began" the work, but that he himself had subtracted the time that he estimated Scott used in working on other material and in travel. (Some of the travel was in connection with the production of *Napoleon*.) So the *actual writing* of the work took "hardly more than twelve months," which gives quite a different picture of the book's production. (Scott was noted for the speed with which he produced *all* his works.)

Lockhart continued: "The magnitude of the theme and the copious detail with which it was treated appear to have frightened the critics of the time. None of our great reviews grappled with the books at all." Napoleon had died in 1821, and Scott began his work in 1825. He had no previous biography to follow. Lockhart attributed much of the criticism to Scott's impartiality in treating Napoleon.⁶ The situation would be somewhat analogous to that of a great American man of letters attempting an objective portrait of Adolf Hitler in 1949 and arriving at the conclusion that, after all, Hitler had his strong points.

Too, exactly those points which the French would think were praiseworthy the English were likely to think were most heinous. Scott received criticism from both sides of the Channel, but for different reasons. The outcry in some of the reviews was not against Scott's treatment of the Revolution (called "Preliminary Review" in the book) but against his treatment of Napoleon and his policies. Mrs. White, of course, was interested only in the preliminary section of the book, which dealt specifically with the Revolution.

The history was never accepted as fully authoritative. That Scott was not as great a historian as he was a novelist caused some disappointment. Nevertheless the book was unusually popular. It certainly did not receive universal disclaim. Goethe wrote: "The richest, the easiest, the most celebrated narrator of the century undertakes to write the history of his own time. . . .

What could now be more delightful to me, than leisurely and calmly to sit down and listen to the discourse of such a man, while clearly, truly, and with all the skill of a great artist, he recalls to me the incidents on which through life I have meditated, and the influence of which is still daily in operation?"

Goethe observed that he himself had conversed with Napoleon, and often he had considered thoughtfully the political events of the age. James Fenimore Cooper wrote Scott to console him about the displeasure with which some Frenchmen had greeted the history (one general had even threatened to duel because of the treatment he had received): "The French abuse you a little, but, as they begun to do this five months before the book was published, you have no great reason to regard their criticism. It would be impossible to write the truth on such a subject and please this nation. One frothy gentleman denounced you in my presence as having a low, vulgar style, very much such a one as characterized the pen of Shakespeare."⁸

Peterson suggests James C. Corson's *A Bibliography of Sir Walter Scott* "for a list and summaries of contemporary reviews."⁹ But Corson's book does not give summaries. Only four works (of a list of over thirty) have any content notation at all. The notations are brief quotes, truncated sentences that give the exact words that Peterson passes on in his article, and nothing more. They are added as synopses of these works because these in particular are negative; and the mildest of these has been omitted from the Peterson article.

Corson added this to the comment on *The Eclectic Review*: "The reviewer [in the 1827 article] does admit, however, that, with a good deal of re-writing, the work could be made valuable."¹⁰ A reader unfamiliar with the genre of criticism in the nineteenth century might be led to think that there is some valid reason for trusting the judgment of the two reviewers whose single phrases have been brought forward. Actually, would-be men of letters frequently attacked the great with a ferocity that would make us shudder today. Moreover, there is no reason to think that these men were historians themselves, or would even be taken by their readers as expressing anything more than their personal opinions. Literary journals in those days were much more closely identified with a political viewpoint, and the speed with which they came and went was bound to make anything a reviewer said something less than weighty, especially when the comment was on someone of Scott's stature.

It is evident that Peterson himself has not read the full works he cites (or the group as a whole). I think it would be more valuable for the reader to

read the full work rather than the single piece of sentence quoted from each, and then judge for himself whether the objections are to Scott the historian, or to Scott the stylist, or to Scott the literary enemy. The obvious test of *public* reaction to the reviews is the way in which the book sold. It enjoyed a long popularity — and did indeed help Scott pay off his debts.

JAMES A. WYLIE

59

The second source treated is that of James A. Wylie (1808-1890), a very well-known nineteenth century author who, with good reason, shared the fear that most Calvinists had of the power of the papacy. Quite *unlike* Scott, who had noted in his journals his wish to "die a skeptic," Wylie was an ordained minister. He was an editor for fourteen years (1846-1860) and a professor of religion at the Protestant institute at Edinburgh for thirty years (1860-1890). He held a doctor of laws degree from Aberdeen University. By no means were all of his works devoted to grinding a Protestant ax, the unfortunate term Peterson uses in an effort to dismiss Wylie as a historian.

Wylie had indeed come to the most strong conclusion about the nature of the papacy, convictions not particularly shared by Scott. His *History of Protestantism* had brought his mind continually in contact with the actions of the papacy during the period from the earliest reformers to the counter-reformation. A thorough study of that period of history was not particularly calculated to set the mind at ease. However, there is an even more significant factor at work here. Wylie wrote his history (it was not outdated when Mrs. White used it) during 1874-77, when Catholicism was at its nadir.

The pope of the time was none other than Pius IX, who signed a concordat with Austria, strengthened the position of the church in France to its highest power since the Revolution a century before, and convened a universal council to solidify his authority. It was this council (the little-discussed Vatican I) that the pope guided into the doctrine of papal infallibility in matters of faith and morals. Pius interpreted "faith and morals" to mean practically everything touching human life, and he made claims more absolute than any pontiff in history. In 1864 he issued the famous Syllabus of Errors, blacklisting such dangerous errors as freedom of conscience, separation of church and state, democracy, and the right of religions other than Catholicism to exist within a state.¹¹

All of this was not likely to commend the papacy to a scholar of Wylie's stature. He was certainly not alone in his fears; but he had a better basis than blind prejudice for them, both as a Calvinist minister and as a historian. In view of the almost fantastic claims Pius IX was fulminating, it is

not surprising that a Protestant scholar would attempt "the exposure of papal errors," Wylie's stated intention of doing so with clarity and vigor is to be lauded.¹²

Peterson apparently has no objection to Wylie at all except that Wylie has arrived at the same conclusions as Mrs. White. The strange argument is given that Mrs. White should not have used Wylie, since Wylie shared her conclusions. Are we to assume that all historians who agree with Mrs. White are therefore automatically excluded as sources of historical truth? Non sequitur.

GEORGE R. GLEIG

60 The third author discussed is George Robert Gleig (1796-1888). Whereas Wylie had been one of the founders of the Free Church of Scotland and throughout his lifetime was opposed to the liturgical and ritual practices of the Church of England, which seemed to him to be reflecting Rome, Gleig was the son of an Episcopal bishop, himself a minister of the Church of England. Throughout his life he remained a staunch high churchman. Once again, the supposed correspondence fails to materialize.

Peterson says that Gleig's "chief contribution to British public life was an attack on the Reform Bill of 1832."¹³ This is quite untrue. Gleig was a popular minister and had a large parish. He had begun writing history as early as the 1830s. In 1844 he became the chaplain-general of the British armed forces and in addition was the inspector-general of military schools, but perhaps his favorite work was the chaplaincy of the Chelsea Hospital, where he was noted for philanthropy and zeal.¹⁴ In the light of these facts it is difficult to understand Peterson's statement and his choice of one lone fact for Gleig.

Moreover, I fail to see the connection between Gleig's opposition to the Reform Bill in 1832 and an article written *thirty-eight years later*. Does Mrs. White's use of the two lines from the *Blackwood's* article endorse Gleig's opposition to the Reform Bill, or endorse his unusual zeal and philanthropy at Chelsea Hospital? Does it endorse ideas put forth in his series of textbooks for schoolchildren, or ideas found in *India and Its Army*, or any of his numerous other works? Or does it, in fact, endorse any of his ideas at all other than those expressed in the two sentences which she quoted?

ARCHIBALD ALISON

The next author treated is Sir Archibald Alison (1792-1867). The choice of Alison and the exclusion of Henry White is unfair and does not fit the

reasons given for choices and exclusions. Henry White has more material quoted, line for line, than Archibald Alison (a fact I shall return to shortly).

The only thing learned about Alison is that *The Dictionary of National Biography* mentions his typical Tory beliefs. Supposedly his intentions were to be interpreted "to prove that Providence was on the side of the Tories."¹⁵ If Peterson had given the full quotation rather than a piece of sentence, we would see that this was not a statement of the compilers at all, but of leading Tory minister Benjamin Disraeli, who, though himself a Conservative, did not agree with Alison's conclusions. Apparently Sir Archibald's conclusions were not so much his party's as his own!

61 The twentieth century historian G. P. Gooch quoted by Peterson says in his *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* that "Alison himself rightly attributed his success to the surpassing interest of his subject and his priority in the field. Readers could afford to overlook his platitudes in return for the first comprehensive survey of the most eventful years in modern history."¹⁶ Alison's *History of Europe* was successful and was considered by Gooch to have priority in its field, to be a book that readers could use and yet easily distinguish Alison's own maxims. Gooch lists Hallam, Macaulay, Alison, and Napier as historians who were read all over the world.¹⁷ This fact is especially important.

Peterson next says incorrectly that Mrs. White quoted Alison twice. One of these quotes (four lines long), found on page 274-275 of *The Great Controversy* (1911), in reality is a quote from Lacretelle, whom Alison quoted. The only quotation from Alison, then, is this found on page 276:

"Mortals, cease to tremble before the powerless thunders of a God whom your fears have created. Henceforth acknowledge no divinity but Reason. I offer you its noblest and purest image; if you must have idols, sacrifice only to such as this. . . . Fall before the august Senate of Freedom, oh! Veil of Reason!"

The goddess, after being embraced by the president, was mounted on a magnificent car, and conducted, amid an immense crowd, to the cathedral of Notre Dame, to take the place of the Deity. There she was elevated on the high altar, and received the adoration of all present.¹⁸

What is most revealing about this single quote from Alison is that it reveals nothing. The description of this particular piece of republican foolishness was not limited to Tory historians; it was material well known and easily verifiable. It would seem that Alison's material is "brief and primarily factual."¹⁹ Why does Peterson include Alison but ignore Henry White, from whom more material is quoted?

Perhaps it is because the invalidity of the theory being propounded would be apparent if Henry White (1812-1880) had been treated. Similar research on him reveals that he was a careful and reputable scholar and author of standard history texts. He had worked at Geneva with d'Aubigné, and his *History of France* went through eight editions. The *Dictionary of National Biography* says that "in 1867 he published his most important book, 'The Massacre of St. Bartholomew, preceded by a History of the Religious Wars in the Reign of Charles IX,' London, 8vo, a work of genuine research. White's was the first English treatise to show that the massacre was the result of a sudden resolution, and not of a long-prepared conspiracy."²⁰

62

The striking thing about Henry White is that his perspective was so completely different from Alison's, as indeed both were different from either Wylie's or Scott's. Unlike Wylie he was a secular historian; unlike Scott he was an educator. It is not suprising that White was not treated in "A Textual Study."

M. A. THIERS

Anachronistically, Peterson did include Marie Joseph Louise Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877), the "M. A. Thiers" of *The Great Controversy*.²¹ The Peterson article gives one line of Gooch, one which Gooch himself said was based on the critic Croker, hardly a trustworthy commentary on the worth of the work of a French leader. A careful look at what Gooch said gives a more balanced view:

He combines an unshakable conviction of the justice and necessity of the Revolution with a detached view of its agents. . . . He is an out-spoken opponent of the Terror, warmly admires the private virtues and courage of the royal family, and blames many actions of the Revolutionists. . . .

The 'History of the French Revolution' scarcely deserved its popularity, but some of the charges against it are greatly exaggerated. . . . Like Mignet he misread the Girondins and overpraised the Directory, but his general approval of the aims and results of the Revolution, combined with repudiation of the Terror, represents the broad verdict of history.²²

This sounds like something less than an indictment of the work as untrustworthy.

Peterson almost reveals how inadequate is the theory of similar bias when he mentions that Thiers was president of the French Republic, and when he mentions just two paragraphs earlier that Gleig (the military Episcopalian bishop) was advocating military intervention on the part of

the British government in France — in his article of 1870. Thiers was a prominent member of the National Assembly elected in the crisis of 1870. He became president, not of the Third Republic, but of the short-lived Provisional Republic as the necessary compromise candidate in the struggle to form a new government that followed the debacle of Napoleon III's downfall. *This was the year 1871.*

So Thiers was a French political centrist. If there was one idea he would have liked less than all others, one can well imagine it would have been the thought of British military intervention in France that Gleig was advocating at the time. It would have been hard in 1888 to cite intentionally two authors with such opposite opinions as these men! Nor should one attempt to downgrade Thier's history because of his political experience; the opposite view would seem to be far more reasonable.

For purposes of discussion, I have referred only to those authorities and works cited by Peterson and have added facts, figures, and dates where it seemed absolutely necessary to do so. I should point out here that these sources are extremely narrow and limited, however. The similarities that were alleged to exist between the various authors are at best superficial. To attempt this kind of textual analysis on so narrow a scale is in its own way incomplete. To treat five of the scores of authors used in *The Great Controversy* is certainly inadequate. But the reader is advised to study in greater detail the lives of even the five men used as examples; even the superficial similarities are nonexistent.²³

The greater problem is that this method does not fit the facts of the situation; it takes no account of the actual way in which the historians were chosen.

II

I turn now to the wider questions. On what basis did Mrs. White in reality choose her historians? What changes were made between the various editions? What do these changes reveal about Mrs. White's changing intentions?

Though Peterson declines comment on the plagiarism issue and states specifically that he wishes to avoid this question, a carefully selected passage compares Wylie's account with Mrs. White's obvious paraphrase. This is done, however, five pages after the admission that Nichol had already treated this very issue in detail and after the comment that "I have no quarrel with Nichol's arguments" that follows it.²⁴

The first "error" treated is that of the tocsin, or ringing bell. This is certainly a familiar problem. Which bell was rung? Supposedly a factual error

in the 1888 edition had to be corrected in the 1911 printing of the book. It is alleged that the real error was in misreading the source prior to 1888. I quote the Peterson article:

Wylie (volume two, p. 600), upon whom Mrs. White was drawing at this point in the chapter, wrote that "the signal for the massacre was to be the tolling of the great bell of the Palace of Justice." Two pages later in his book, Wylie explained that in the event it was the bell of St. Germain l'Auxerois which was rung. Obviously Mrs. White had read the first statement but not the second, for she displayed confusion also about the time of night when the bell sounded.²⁵

This is incorrect. The truth of the matter is that Wylie did indeed affirm on page 600 that the signal was to be the bell of the Palace of Justice. On page 602 he said:

64

The Queen-mother feeling the suspense unbearable, or else afraid, as Maimbourg suggests, that Charles, "greatly disturbed by the idea of the horrible butchery, would revoke the order he had given for it," anticipated the signal by sending one at two o'clock of the morning to ring the bell of St. Germain l'Auxerois, which was nearer than that of the Palace of Justice. Scarcely had its first peal startled the silence of the night when a pistol-shot was heard. The king started to his feet, and summoning an attendant he bade him go and stop the massacre. It was too late; the bloody work had begun. *The great bell of the Palace had now begun to toll*; another moment and every steeple in Paris was sending forth its peal" [italics supplied].

The original statement in the 1888 edition was that "the great bell of the palace, tolling at dead of night, was a signal for the slaughter."²⁶ In every single sense in which this sentence could be taken it is absolutely correct.

Actually, Wylie left it to his reader to decide whether his *page 602 account* (which fits Mrs. White's narrative well) was in reference to the Palace of Justice or the royal palace. These buildings, along with the royal chapel, St. Germain l'Auxerois, were all within half a block, and the king (a twenty-four-year-old dying neurotic) may have heard one bell, two bells, or all three bells. Wylie did say that the palace bell set all the other bells to ringing. (I will discuss shortly the reasons for changing the perfectly legitimate 1888 statement.) The bells began to toll somewhere between two and three in the morning, and I find it difficult to see how the unchanged statement "tolling at dead of night" displays any confusion about time.

Furthermore, the two Wylie statements are not as widely separated as the reader was led to believe. The first statement is found at the bottom of page 600 of Wylie's work. Page 601 is a full-page engraving of the murder of Admiral Coligny. The second statement is actually part of the next paragraph, which is found on page 602. Since Mrs. White summarized informa-

tion found on pages 602-603, it is apparent that not only had she read the second statement, but probably she was drawing on it.

Next Peterson gives the example of the "breviaries of the Old and New Testaments" changed to read "breviaries, missals, and the Old and New Testaments" in the later book. The key here is the lack of understanding of how historical information was gathered for *The Great Controversy*. Since the material came from the Bouchez-Roux collection,²⁷ probably the wording is that of an original translation, one which very probably was correct. It is obvious that Peterson was unclear about what went on in Basel in preparation for the 1888 edition. (See note 33.)

65

The next "error" is supposedly exaggeration. In 1888 Mrs. White supposedly spoke of "millions" and then trimmed this down to "multitudes" by 1911. But anyone familiar with the way in which Mrs. White uses the word "multitude" throughout the book (e.g., the 1911 edition, page 667, where it refers to all the lost of all ages) would find it difficult to see this as a scaling-down. The reason for the change is obvious. Mrs. White was trying to thwart the use of belief in "verbal" inspiration (that is, that use of every word, every phrase, every punctuation mark by an inspired author was the work of the Spirit and therefore an absolute) to decide exactly how many persons died (or which bell was rung). Thus she exchanged the more technical term for the less technical one.

Any historian would be hard put to decide which of the statements is the more correct. In that decade of constant turmoil, destruction of life and loss of records (1789-99), it would be hard to research this matter properly. Certainly Peterson cannot tell with any accuracy how correct or incorrect the original statement was, as he seems to be suggesting is possible.

He next suggests that Mrs. White transformed Wylie's 400 to 500 refugees into "thousands upon thousands" and compressed them from the longer period into the sixteenth century. Peterson's footnote on this point says:

Wylie . . . goes on to assert: "The men who were now fleeing from France were the first to tread a path which was to be trodden again and again by hundreds of thousands of their countrymen in years to come. During the following two centuries and [a] half these scenes were renewed at short intervals." Mrs. White reduces all of this information to one sentence and thereby distorts it: "Thousands upon thousands found safety in flight; and this continued for two hundred and fifty years after the opening of the Reformation." In other words, Mrs. White removes Wylie's "hundreds of thousands" of Protestant exiles from "the following two centuries and [a] half" and instead places this enormous group in the sixteenth century.²⁹

There is certainly a distortion here, but it comes because the sentence from Mrs. White has been lifted from its context (never a very reliable way of determining what an author means to convey). The E. G. White quotation, followed by her use of Wylie on page 278 (1911), looks like this:

But unhappy France prohibited the Bible, and banned its disciples. *Century after century*, men of principle and integrity, men of intellectual acuteness and moral strength, who had the courage to avow their convictions, and the faith to suffer for the truth, — *for centuries* these men toiled as slaves in the galleys, perished at the stake, or rotted in dungeon cells. Thousands upon thousands found safety in flight; and *this continued* for two hundred and fifty years after the opening of the Reformation.

Scarcely was there a generation of Frenchmen *during that long period* that did not witness the disciples of the gospel fleeing before the insane fury of the persecutor, and carrying with them the intelligence, the arts, the industry, the order, in which, as a rule, they pre-eminently excelled, to enrich the lands in which they found an asylum [*italics supplied*].

66

The Wylie quote runs on for another twenty-three lines, emphasizing repeatedly that this went on for “three hundred years.” Nothing could be more clearly stated. It is quite clear that in the context, the fleeing, like the persecution, continued for a period of hundreds of years. And, by the way, what becomes of the exaggeration? Mrs. White replaced Wylie’s “hundreds of thousands” with “thousands upon thousands.” Obviously, hundreds of thousands means a minimum of 200,000 persons, and Mrs. White’s phrase is certainly a justifiable synonym that could be used for numbers far smaller!

Now I turn to the ill-founded charge that Mrs. White’s selectivity constituted suppression of the facts and thereby distorted the truth. The surprising statement is made that “she did not take into account any political, social, or economic forces operating in the Old Regime.” The most direct answer to this kind of allegation is simply to quote the numerous statements regarding the situation of society in the Old Regime. The 1911 edition (pages 279-280) said:

The gospel would have brought to France the solution of those political and social problems that baffled the skill of her clergy, her king, and her legislators, and finally plunged the nation into anarchy and ruin. But under the domination of Rome the people had lost the Saviour’s lessons of self-sacrifice and unselfish love. They had been led away from the practice of self-denial for the good of others. The rich had found no rebuke for their oppression of the poor, the poor no help for their servitude and degradation. The selfishness of the wealthy and powerful grew more and more apparent and oppressive. For centuries the greed and profligacy of the noble resulted in grinding extortion toward the peasant. The rich wronged the poor, and the poor hated the rich.

In many provinces the estates were held by the nobles, and the laboring classes were only tenants; they were at the mercy of their landlords and were forced to sub-

mit to their exorbitant demands. The burden of supporting both the church and the state fell upon the middle and lower classes, who were heavily taxed by the civil authorities and by the clergy.

Thus far mentioned, in order, are: (1) the domination of the state by a foreign power; (2) oppression of the poor by the rich; (3) growing oppression due to selfishness; (4) tenancy; (5) the unreasonable taxation of the middle class; and (6) the support of the clergy by the state.

Then there follows a twenty-line quotation from Wylie which described (1) the lack of legal sanctions for the poor; (2) their overburdening with physical labor; (3) lack of redress of grievances; (4) the unfairness of the courts; (5) bribery of the courts; (6) the siphoning off of tax money for private purposes; and finally (7) the exemption of the First and Second Estates from taxation.

Thereafter comes a sound condemnation of Louis XV, "who, even in those evil times," the author said, "was distinguished as an indolent, frivolous, and sensual monarch." Then, "With a depraved and cruel aristocracy and an impoverished and ignorant lower class, the state financially embarrassed and the people exasperated, it needed no prophet's eye to foresee a terrible impending outbreak."

Mrs. White continued in a similar vein for another two pages, laying a large share of the blame for the rampant social evils on the clergy. She charged that this group was fostering intentionally the prevailing social conditions to weaken the state and make it dependent on the church: "Rome had misrepresented the character of God and perverted His requirements, and now men rejected both the Bible and its Author. . . . Enraged at the glittering cheat to which they had so long paid homage, they rejected truth and falsehood together; and mistaking license for liberty, the slaves of vice exulted in their imagined freedom."

This is certainly consistent with Mrs. White's treatment of history as the outworking of two contending forces grappling for the minds of men, especially when it is compared with the statements elsewhere in the book stating what she believed the power of Rome to be based on. She had quite fairly warned in the introduction on what basis she would proceed.²⁹ On page 285 she stated:

When Satan wrought through the Roman Church to lead men away from obedience, his agency was concealed, and his work was so disguised that the degradation and misery which resulted were not seen to be the fruit of transgression. And his power was so far counteracted by the working of the Spirit of God, that his purposes were prevented from reaching their full fruition. The people did not trace the effect to its cause, and discover the source of their miseries. But in the Revolution, the law of God

was openly set aside by the National Council. And in the Reign of Terror which followed, the working of cause and effect could be seen by all.

The Revolution was quite clearly presented in this chapter as the unavoidable result of the French reaction to the Reformation. Rather than ignore the political, social, and economic forces in operation, the author emphasized them, and then, having done so, went a step farther to make them evidences of an even deeper problem. The charge of one-dimensional history totally fails to explain the purpose of the chapter.

Peterson goes on to the phrase "priest of the new order" for the comedian Monort, suggesting that Mrs. White hoped to give the false impression that Monort was a member of the Roman Catholic clergy who had defrocked before the Convention. The Ellen White statement is found on page 274 of the 1911 edition:

He [the Bishop of Paris — we are in the middle of a Scott quote, volume one, chapter seventeen] then laid on the table his episcopal decorations, and received a fraternal embrace from the president of the Convention. Several apostate priests followed the example of this prelate.

"And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth." Infidel France had silenced the reproving voice of God's two witnesses. The word of truth lay dead in her streets, and those who hated the restrictions and requirements of God's law were jubilant. Men publicly defied the King of heaven. Like the sinners of old, they cried: "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?" Psalm 73:11.

With blasphemous boldness almost beyond belief, one of the priests of the new order said: "God, if You exist, avenge Your injured name. I bid You defiance! You remain silent; You dare not launch Your thunders."

A casual look at the full quotation, thus disconnected from the context, would give the impression that in reality infidel France had silenced the voice of God's two witnesses (traditionally understood to be the Testaments) by suppressing the Bishop of Paris and his fellow prelates. It is much easier to interpret the passage to mean that the "word of truth" and "restrictions and requirements" that were hated were those of Roman Catholicism, and that the Almighty was being abused in the person of his bishop, rather than the version Peterson gives us!

Of course, this is not the meaning at all in context. Anyone reading the chapter with any care would recognize immediately that the paragraph that begins "'And they that dwell upon the earth'" signals a new section of the chapter, with material under a new subheading. There are several of these verses from Revelation eleven in the chapter; they are its skeleton,

and the key to its interpretation. Each one signals another subdivision and a new phase of Mrs. White's running exposition of the prophecy.

Such phrases are to be found on page 267, paragraph two, "They shall prophesy;" page 268, paragraph one, "And if any man will hurt them," and paragraph three, "When they shall have finished;" page 269, paragraph two, "The great city;" page 271, paragraph one, "Where also our Lord;" page 273, paragraph two, "The beast that ascendeth;" page 274, paragraph two, "And they that dwell upon the earth;" page 287, paragraph one, "After three days and a half."

In each of these cases the introduction of the text signals that the theme is being changed to the new theme of the next verse, and all the historical material introduced will be connected in some way with the fulfillment of that particular verse.

Furthermore, any freshman English student should be able to identify the technique usually termed comparison and contrast that is used on page 274. The old order is being compared and contrasted with the new order; the old priests with the new priests. There is no hint that they are the *same* individuals, but rather quite different ones.

Peterson tells us that Mrs. White's phrase "priest of the new order" could only be used "in some extravagantly metaphorical sense." Is he suggesting that the English word "priest" has only one meaning, that is, a member of the Roman Catholic clergy? This is at best dubious etymology. A national magazine recently referred to a certain popular music idol as the "high priest of rock." Was the well-known weekly journal engaging only in extravagantly metaphorical wordplay liable to be misunderstood by its readers? Certainly not. Nor is there any evidence that the word had any such limited meaning when Mrs. White used it in the nineteenth century.³⁰

I have shown that the sources used were not poor ones, nor were they mishandled. Instead, they were used soundly and consistently to present those things Mrs. White had seen in vision.

One last point ought to be observed, and that is this. Not only is the study of the sources valid if, and only if, it proceeds along the stated criteria which Mrs. White used, but that a study of this one particular chapter should assume that *it does not purport to be a history of the French Revolution*. The Peterson thesis has missed the whole point. The title of the chapter is "*The Bible and the French Revolution*." Any reader should assume that the title of a given work is in some way related to its content.

I repeat: the chapter only purports to examine the *relationship* between the Bible and the French Revolution. It does not pretend to be an examina-

tion of the Revolution in general, but it does deal with only certain aspects of it. Viewed in this light, the author's intended exposition of Revelation eleven (which, by the way, was entirely her own, and the only reason for using historical data at all) examines the relationship between France's rejection of the Reformation, the resultant and long-continued social ills, and the consequent Revolution. Repeatedly and in many different ways the author showed that this was her only purpose.

The book's introduction had stressed the author's philosophy and intentions. Any careful reader should read the introduction thoughtfully and take it into account before attempting an analysis of the book itself. I think that the introduction adequately speaks for its author concerning her theory of history, and no one need enter into such a discussion, competent or otherwise.

It is true, as was suggested, that many of Ellen White's readers know little or nothing of the real Mrs. White. I think that there is everything to be gained and nothing to be lost if Adventist scholarship would take a long and careful look at her work. Truth — if it is truth — is always strengthened by careful study.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- 1 William S. Peterson, A textual and historical study of Ellen G. White's account of the French Revolution, *Spectrum* 2:60 (Autumn 1970).
- 2 Sir Walter Scott, *The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte*, two volumes (Philadelphia: J. and J. L. Gihon 1858). This is the American edition. The original work was printed in London in 1827.
George R. Gleig, The great collapse, *Blackwood's Magazine* 108: 641-656 (November 1870).
James A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, three volumes (London: Cassell, Petter and Galpin 1874-1877).
Henry White, *The Massacre of St. Bartholomew* (New York: Harper and Brothers 1871). This is the American edition used. The larger work appeared in London in 1868.
Sir Archibald Alison, *History of Europe, 1789-1815* (New York: Harper and Brothers 1872). *The Great Controversy* notes give no publisher for the American edition. Peterson lists a much earlier edition that was not used.
M. A. Thiers, *The History of the French Revolution*; trans., Frederick Shoberl (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott; London: Richard Bentley and Son 1854). Peterson is incorrect in his initial change. *The Great Controversy* correctly follows the Library of Congress designation "M. A." Peterson lists an earlier edition which was not used.
Philip Buchez and Prosper Roux, *Histoire Parlementaire de la Revolution* (Paris: Paulin 1834-1838); also titled *Journal des Assemblies Nationales*. The subtitle reveals that it covers a period from 1789 to 1815. Its catalogue card shows that it is a forty-volume work published in twenty volumes.

Guillaume de Felice, *History of the Protestants of France*; trans., P. E. Barnes (London 1853). Neither Peterson nor *The Great Controversy* notes list a publisher.

J. H. Merle d'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation in Europe in the Time of Calvin*, eight volumes (London: Longmans 1863-1878).

- 3 Peterson, p. 61.
- 4 J. G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company 1901), vol. 5, p. 88. This whole period of Scott's life should be read carefully.
- 5 Hogg goes on to relate that Scott had apparently researched the material in advance, as we gather also from the journal.
- 6 Lockhart, p. 88.
- 7 Lockhart, p. 88.
- 8 Lockhart, p. 89.
- 9 Peterson, p. 68.
- 10 James C. Corson, *A Bibliography of Sir Walter Scott* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd 1943), p. 282.
- 11 Joseph Moody (editor), *Church and Society* (New York: Arts, Incorporated 1953), p. 233.
- 12 *The Dictionary of National Biography*. Founded in 1882 by George Smith; edited by Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sydney Lee (Oxford University 1959-1960), vol. 21, p. 1152.
- 13 Peterson, pp. 61-62.
- 14 *DNB*, vol. 7, p. 1304.
- 15 *DNB*, vol. 1, p. 288.
- 16 George P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press 1959), p. 286. Peterson quotes from the 1913 edition, but I am here using the 1959 revision by the author.
- 17 Gooch, p. 287.
- 18 Alison, volume one, chapter ten, as quoted by Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association 1911), p. 276.
- 19 This was the one criterion for dismissing the authors not treated by Peterson in his article.
- 20 *DNB*, vol. 21, p. 48.
This last piece of information is of the greatest importance, as it marked a breakthrough in an understanding of the Massacre, and is still held today as the basis for a proper understanding of it. For a thorough modern treatment of the period, see J. E. Neale, *The Age of Catherine de Medici* (London: Jonathan Cape 1963).
- 21 See note 2, item six. Peterson has not looked at the Library of Congress catalogue card correctly. The full name is given on the lower right-hand side of all catalogue cards.
- 22 Gooch, pp. 190-191.
- 23 The non-treatment of d'Aubigné is unusual, since, of the numerous works cited, he is most frequently referred to. Mrs. White had stated her desire to procure authorities noted throughout the Protestant world whose references would be accepted by Roman Catholics. See note 29.
- 24 One could wish that Peterson had accepted his own statement and not re-introduced the plagiarism issue several pages later. A more glaring inconsistency

of this type, however, is found in the statement on page 66: "To treat *The Great Controversy* as history is to ignore the book's fundamentally theological character."

- 25 Peterson, p. 64.
See Wylie, vol. 2, pp. 600-604, for the full account. See also note 31 for the original White statement.
- 26 See note 31.
- 27 See note 2, item seven.
- 28 Peterson, p. 68. See note 25.
- 29 This was the longest introduction Mrs. White had written for one of her later works. It was obviously designed to be a synopsis of her understanding of the gift of prophecy to non-Adventist readers. Mrs. White compares herself to the extra-biblical prophets (e.g., Iddo and Jasher) and lays a basis for the purely prophetic section of her book.
- 30 The etymology of our English word *priest* is enlightening. It is directly traceable through the Latin to the Greek *presbuteros* or "elder," and was used to designate "civic as well as religious officials." See William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, fourth edition (University of Chicago Press 1968), p. 706. The word retained both meanings.
- 31 By a fortunate coincidence, such comparison is easily possible for the average reader. The 1888 text copyright having elapsed, the book was recently republished privately (New York: Pyramid Books 1967). The number is N-1719. Quotation marks have been inserted by the publishers, but are sometimes in error.
- 32 See Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association 1946), pp. 574-575. See also W. C. White, *The Great Controversy* — new edition, in *Notes and Papers Concerning Ellen G. White and the Spirit of Prophecy* (Washington: E. G. White Estate 1966), p. 194.
- 33 For further information on the production of the 1888 and 1911 *Great Controversy* revisions, see W. C. White, *The Great Controversy* — new edition, in *Notes and Papers*. See also Arthur L. White, The place of history in "*The Great Controversy*" story, in the same work. The second work is the unpublished manuscript" Peterson referred to.