

# LETTERS

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Let me . . . suggest two topics that seem worth being developed for SPECTRUM by competent scholars.

First, the sociological, historical, and political background of Ellen G. White as expressed in her writings. Some of her statements, opinions, advice, and messages seem to represent lower middle-class New England prejudice against and jealousy of upper ranks. (I gained this impression from reading about the Civil War in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, pages 253 ff., and from her rather ingenuous suggestions in *The Ministry of Healing* for solving the problems of the lower classes in the early North American industrialization.)

Carl Amery, in *Die Kapitulation oder: Deutscher Katholizismus heute* [*The Capitulation or: German Catholicism Today*], which he wrote about ten years ago, promoted the term *Milieu-katholizismus*. This term, which can easily be applied to the Adventist church in both Germany and Austria (the situation differs in these countries), gives a better understanding of events and reactions that otherwise would be misunderstood or misinterpreted. Studies that would elucidate the circumstances around Mrs. White might contribute to understanding her.

Also, a topic already suggested by another reader of SPECTRUM — the illumination of the medical profession in Mrs. White's time — has scarcely been made clear yet. From random information I have here in Europe, I conclude that some astonishing items stressed as examples of her supranatural foreknowledge are, rather, really the forming of legends by the White Estate — inasmuch as Mrs. White does not have prior temporality.

What can be found in the writings of Jackson, Trall, Coles, Shew, Graham, Alcott, Horace Mann, Gunn, and others?

These names are drawn from Dores E. Robinson's *The Story of Our Health Message* [Nashville: Southern Publishing Association 1943]. What influence and extension did the ideas of Cotton Mather have? What about Sweetser and his *Mental Hygiene*? What about Henry Maudsley?

The basic principles of Ellen White's writings on health seem to me to be in close relationship to *Naturheilkunde*, a lay movement out of the late decades of the nineteenth century, continuing the ideas of the era of Romantic medicine especially in Germany. Did this movement have an influence in the United States? What about mesmerism and phrenology (against which Mrs. White spoke a warning — and surely had reason for it — at a time in the United States when it was no longer of actual interest in Europe)?

It is not too difficult for me to draw quotations out of both professional and lay medical literature of the nineteenth century here in Europe to show that much of Mrs. White's writing on medicine deals with ideas more or less commonly known to be contemporary with or antecedent to her. It would be of value to illuminate the fact of their presence in her surroundings, but such a study is practically impossible for someone outside the USA to do.

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Tuland gives a false impression [SPECTRUM 5 (4) :16-24 1973] when he tells us that the [original basis for] the noncombatant principle in the Adventist church was the sixth commandment but does not clarify the [subsequent basis determined for] this principle before World War II.

He points out, and I agree, that *kill* and *murder* are not the same. He refers to kill-

ing in military combat under a theocracy. However, he fails to point out New Testament texts (after theocracy) that shed light on killing in military service (e.g., John 18:36, Luke 9:56, and 1 John 4:17).

I was an instructor in the Medical Cadet Corps twenty-five years ago. We used material (prepared by Carlyle B. Haynes) making very clear the basis of the noncombatant position (not based on the sixth commandment, as I have indicated) and also making clear that "each man must seek his own way — with his God," as Tuland says.

Chapter 11 of Haynes' booklet says: "He is bound to use every means to enlighten his conscience. . . . Nevertheless it remains true that whatever a man's conscience may be and in whatever condition it is, it remains his sole moral guide to conduct. . . . It is what he himself understands and believes that must guide him."\*

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\* *Basic Principles of Noncombatancy as Held by Seventh-day Adventists* 1950 (a mimeographed booklet prepared by Carlyle B. Haynes, secretary of the War Service Commission of Seventh-day Adventists).

I want to continue receiving SPECTRUM for at least another year, if I should live so long (I am already past my eighty-sixth birthday anniversary).

For years I have been wondering how long it will be before some wise person will use the columns of SPECTRUM to deal with such subjects as are obviously handled in the King James Version of the Bible differently from most other English versions, especially the New English Bible. There are at least two good reasons why we should regard this [latter] version as being closer to the original text in meaning than any other version. First, the people doing the translation were superior scholars in the original languages of the Bible. Second, they had access to manuscripts considerably earlier than those used by the translators of the King James Version.

I shall mention only two [passages] that have given me trouble.

First, the King James Version is the only one I have examined that speaks of the "cleansing" of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14. Most other versions, including even the Revised Standard Version, carry the idea of *restoring* the sanctuary to the position from which it had been "cast down."

Second, the only place in the Bible, including the King James Version, where the expression *spirit of prophecy* is used is in Revelation 19:10. True, it occurs there in the Revised Standard Version; but there is no capitalization to indicate that the word "spirit" has any other than the common meaning. In most other versions — that is, English versions — that I have examined, the rendering does not indicate any special time at which another inspired prophet is to appear — but rather that everybody who testifies of Jesus has the same spirit that inspired the prophets.

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The discussion of Genesis genealogies by Lawrence T. Geraty in SPECTRUM [volume 6, numbers 1-2, pages 5-18, 1974] provides a helpful understanding of the line-of-descent tabulations that are found in the Bible. There are some aspects of this discussion that deserve additional elaboration.

At the top of page 8 it is stated that written records of ancient civilizations "in some cases extend as far back as about 3000 B.C." Whether intended so by the author or not, the implication is that there is incontrovertible evidence for discrediting the obvious chronological implications of the numerical data given in Genesis 11. The uninformed reader could have been cautioned at this point that the 3000 B.C. stipulation is an estimate based on the current fashion for reconstructing the early development of civilization, and is not a matter of clearly attested historical record.

Eventually the reader is told on page 9

that "the earliest fixed calendrical date in human history" is 1991 B.C., plus or minus possibly ten years. The speculative nature of the current model for human history during the third millennium B.C. should be fully understood before [one proceeds on the presumption that this model] precludes the conclusions believers in the Pentateuch have reached for over 3,000 years before the appearance of modern scientific viewpoints.

On page 11 [the suggestion is] that the correct relationship of Japheth, Ham, and Shem could not be determined from 1 Chronicles without the aid of Genesis. The data in 1 Chronicles 1:5-23 seem to provide an adequate explanation of verse 4 without recourse to Genesis.

That Genesis 5 and 11 do not provide the usual genealogical table seems obvious from the inclusion of time data. In what better way could the [Genesis writer] indicate that he was not providing the usual line-of-descent tabulation that listed only the most illustrious names, or was abbreviated for mnemonic purposes. In these disputed passages of Scripture the authors (Moses, and the Holy Spirit as the primary Author) seem to have provided three significant sets of information with a minimum number of words: (a) line-of-descent data, (b) precise data on the degeneracy that occurred in the human race following the Flood, and (c) stipulation concerning the duration of two important periods in human history. The chronological stipulations would probably be even less credible to the modern mind, and would have been more susceptible to corruption by copyists and translators, if they had been presented in one concise total-span-of-years statement.

On page 13 one encounters the statement "Whatever the reason for the numbers, it cannot have been chronological." By what insight does [Geraty] have the authority to say *cannot*? One might grant him the privilege of saying "may not." On the authority with which Ellen White spoke to the church, we have been informed that "the Bible with its precious gems of truth was

not written for the scholar alone. On the contrary, it was designed for the common people; and the interpretation given by the common people, when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus."\* Dedicated readers who have sought the aid of the Holy Spirit in finding the understanding and relationships which God's Word has been provided to establish have concluded for more than three millennia that a chronological intent is a prominent feature of Genesis 5 and 11.

If these chapters are intended to give only a conspectus of selected individual lives, why is the age at birth of the named son included? There is no specification that the next-named descendant was the firstborn son. It is highly improbable, in fact, that Noah had no sons before he was 500 years old. Furthermore, Noah and Terah probably each had more than three sons. Children born of a given individual are evidently selected for their importance in the subsequent narrative and listed in order of importance rather than in order of birth.

As for the statement "the insertion of the numbers does not change in the least the character of the Genesis genealogies" (page 13), I am constrained to ask, "How could one more clearly and more definitely specify that these disputed passages are *not* to be treated in accord with standard genealogical practice?"

Geraty relies heavily on argument from silence. The hazard in doing this needs no elaboration. The lack of a cumulative total for the data presented in Genesis 5 or 11 is not evidence that Moses considered a summation of these data to be unjustified or unintended.

The lack of specific reference to communication between Abraham and his ancestors as far back as Shem is no proof that such communication did not exist. The book of Genesis provides a highly abbreviated account. The data it does supply seem to have been presented with intent to show that Abraham was contemporary with Terah, Serug, Reu, Eber, Salah, Arphaxad, and

Shem, particularly the latter. In several comments Ellen White clearly implies, although she does not explicitly so state, that Abraham communicated with Shem (presumably before he left Chaldea).

The statement on page 15 that "the whole impression of the Abraham narrative is that the days of the Flood belong to a geological event long past and that the actors in it had died ages before" is in accord with modern viewpoints in anthropology, archaeology, and geology. But it would be difficult to argue that this statement describes the impression that has been gained by the vast majority of those who have been acquainted with the Genesis narrative since it was first written, or even by the majority of those who read it today. If one omits chapter 11, an important part of the Abraham narrative, the strongest evidence regarding a chronological setting in respect to the Flood that can be found in chapters 12-25 is silence. What more can be expected in view of the treatment with which the author begins the Abraham narrative in chapter 11?

In his conclusion Geraty states that "our present knowledge of human civilization in the ancient Near East apparently goes back (at Jericho, for instance) to the seventh millennium B.C." The speculative nature of the assumptions that underlie a presumption that there has been more than 6,000 years of human history between the Flood and the birth of Christ is only lightly alluded to by the term "apparently." In language that could scarcely be more plain, Moses (who lived 3,500 years closer than modern scholars to the early Middle Eastern civilization) indicates that the assumptions involved in this estimate may legitimately be called into question.

Those who are concerned as to how the speculations of modern antiquarians should be weighted against the apparent intent of Moses in Genesis 5 and 11 may be benefited by the last statement made in Geraty's paper (by way of footnote number 21) that "it seems clear that as yet they [scientists and archaeologists] can make no definitive estimate of this time period."

I am well aware of the apparently insuperable problems present-day understanding of radiometric age data, ancient texts, archaeological sites, and geological evidence offers to a chronology based on the most obvious intent of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. I am confident that some of these problems will be resolved before the gospel witness is completed.

But I do not expect many of them will be understood adequately until we have opportunity to talk with individuals who lived during the times in question. The best we can do at present is to find the balance between the weight of evidence, both internal and external, supporting the testimony of Scripture and the hard facts related to current speculations regarding ancient chronology. One should also find the balance between the implications and the possible consequences of retaining or rejecting the "obvious intent" of the chronological data in Genesis.

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\* Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association 1948), vol. 5, p. 331.