

the *Youth* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1864), pp. 24-31.

15. J. H. Waggoner, "Present Truth," *Review and Herald*, 28:77, Aug. 7, 1866. (Emphasis supplied.)

16. Ellen G. White, Ms 7, 1867.

17. [John Harvey Kellogg], "Preface" to Ellen G. White and James White *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Good Health Publishing Co., 1890), p. iii. Hereafter abbreviated *Christian Temperance*.

18. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 30:260, Oct. 8, 1867.

19. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 30:260, Oct. 8, 1867.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, p. xii. For a full discussion of the use Mrs. White made of the writings of others and the charge of plagiarism, see Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1952), pp. 403-467.

22. J[ames] W[hite], "A Test," *Review and Herald*, 8:61, Oct. 16, 1855.

23. J[ames] W[hite], "The Cause," *ibid.*, 7:20, Aug. 7, 1851.

24. [James White], "The Office," *ibid.*, 7:36, Sept. 4, 1855.

25. J[ames] W[hite], *ibid.*, 8:61, Oct. 16, 1855.

26. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 380.

27. Ellen G. White letter to "Brother and Sister Dodge," July 21, 1851. (D-4-1851, Ellen G. White Estate.)

28. Ellen G. White, "Questions and Answers," *Review and Herald*, 30:261, Oct. 8, 1867.

29. W. C. White letter to A. G. Daniells, dated September 20, 1906. (Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, D.C.)

30. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), book 1, p. 57.

31. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 48.

32. *Ibid.*

Note: This review is a condensation of a 24-page double-column document titled, "A Discussion and Review of *Prophetess of Health*," available on request from the Ellen G. White Estate, 6840 Eastern Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20012.

A more lengthy chapter-by-chapter critique may be obtained on request for \$4.00—the cost of duplicating and mailing. In this critique a more detailed analysis as well as much additional documentation will be found. Items dealt with in the full critique include: Ellen White's brush with phrenology, her own practice in the area of diet, her teachings on dress, her discussion of masturbation, Mrs. White's visions, the evaluation of the hostile witnesses, etc., and a host of missing exhibits.

Copies may be secured at the White Estate offices in Washington, D.C., or Berrien Springs, Michigan, or at the Ellen G. White-SDA Research Centers at Loma Linda University, California; Newbold College, England; or Avondale College, Australia. Mail orders in the United States should be directed to the Ellen G. White Estate, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 6840 Eastern Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20012.

III. Ellen White's Emotional Life

Review by Fawn M. Brodie

Ellen G. White is described in Ronald L. Numbers' new biography as one of the four 19th century founders of a major American religious sect, the others being Joseph Smith (Mormonism), Mary Baker Eddy (Christian Science), and Charles Taze Russell (Jehovah's Witnesses). But it is William Miller who is accorded the role of founder of the Adventist movement in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*; Mrs. White is not mentioned at all. It will come as a surprise to readers of Professor Numbers' biography who have

known little about the Seventh-day Adventist Church to learn that it was indeed this tiny, energetic, resourceful mystic who rescued the Adventist movement—after the staggering disappointments of 1844 when Jesus failed to come as Miller had promised—and welded the scattered fragments into a vital religiomedical organization which still uses her "revelations" as fundamental doctrine.

Professor Numbers, historian at the University of Wisconsin, began his research for this biography at Loma Linda University. He is an Adventist. He writes, however, not as a hagiographer but as a professional intent on a dispassionate examination of the sources of Ellen White's ideas. "This, is, I believe," he writes, "the first book about her that seeks neither to

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defend nor to damn but simply to understand.” (p. xi). His book fills a gap in the history of American women as well as American religion. It is excellent, meticulously documented social history, and the author is an expert intellectual detective.

Ellen G. White, like the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, was an eclectic. Both leaders drew from multiple sources the ideas they incorporated in their “revelations.” Mrs. White was indebted chiefly to the health reformers of her time, James C. Jackson, William Alcott, Sylvester Graham and L. B. Coles. Devout believers in the divine origin of her ideas will be disturbed to see the evidence in this volume of how closely some of her revelations parallel paragraphs in Coles’ *Philosophy of Health* (1853), a book she knew intimately. But there is no malice in Numbers’ exposure of her plagiarism. He writes with great respect for the Adventist movement and for the extraordinary little lady who was responsible for its consolidation and expansion.

The author deliberately avoids “extended analyses of her mental health and psychic abilities.” (p. xii), leaving a psychobiographical examination of her life to future writers. The material he provides as background for any clinical study is, nevertheless, rich and provocative. An identical twin, Ellen Harmon was disfigured as a child when struck in the face by a rock. The incident had incalculable consequences—disturbed vision, hand tremors, dizziness, anxiety, to say nothing of the traumatic realization that she must through the remainder of her life see in the face of her twin sister the beauty she had lost. As a convert to Millerism in 1842, she followed the classic adolescent conversion patterns—hours of praying resulting in vivid religious dreams—but with special intensity. Importantly, it was her mother who attributed Ellen’s initial “fainting spell,” when she tried to pray in public for the first time, to “the wondrous power of God.” Thus, the crippled child was supported in her pathology and signaled out for greatness.

Fainting fits, especially among women, were commonplace in the nineteenth century. The relation between such fits and hysteria, and their connection with sexual inhibition, were to be demonstrated brilliantly in the writings and clinical discoveries of Sigmund Freud. It is not sur-

prising that the sexual revolution of our own time has coincided with the virtual disappearance of “hysteria” from our clinics and hospitals. But Ellen G. White was no simple hysteric. The evolution of her fainting spells into the complicated religious trance, followed by “revelations” from God or angels, is the most crucial development in her life. With great deftness, Professor Numbers suggests the importance of models in determining the nature of this evolution. There was first the Reverend Samuel E. Brown, whom she saw turn “porcelain white” and fall from his chair, later recovering to give a testimony with his face “shining with light from the Sun of Righteousness” (p. 12). Later, there were William Foy and Hazen Foss, the latter her sister’s brother-in-law. Ellen White’s trances became ever more stylized and dramatic; her heartbeat slowed and her respiration became imperceptible. Hers were not epileptic seizures, as some have suggested, which always result in amnesia. Though the author does not say so directly, they were clearly related to self-hypnosis, a phenomenon far better understood today than in the midnineteenth century, when “mesmerism” was a fad all over America. The fact that many of her ailments—hand tremors, partial paralysis, difficulties with speech—disappeared after specific trances serves to underline the psychogenic nature of much of her chronic ill health.

There are many resemblances between Ellen G. White and Mary Baker Eddy. Both were semi-invalids as children; both found motherhood difficult and temporarily abandoned their own infants; both found extraordinary reserves of energy for speaking and for religious organization. But where Mrs. Eddy ceased being ill upon reaching maturity, Mrs. White was racked by sickness all her life. Illness followed by miraculous cure became an essential, repetitive pattern. The worst of her nervous collapses, like those of her husband, suggest that her virtual renunciation of sexuality, her spasmodic asceticism, her pathological anxiety over masturbation—which she said would bring crippling, deformity and insanity—contributed to her illnesses rather than alleviating them. In any case, there seems to have been a circle of reinforcement.

There were obviously excellent aspects to her health reform program. At a time when doctors regularly killed patients with their bleeding, purging and quack medicines, Ellen White, like many other health reformers, did a public service by persuading people to abandon all drugs, take regular baths, give up alcohol, tobacco and a fatty diet. Her water cure was not original, but was adapted, like her vegetarianism, from popular practices of her time.

Hydrotherapy, diet reform and temperance are not, however, substitutes for a healthy sex life. Her personal inhibitions, her dislike of "sexual excess" in marriage, common enough among women of her own day, unfortunately had a pernicious influence on her writings. In seeking solutions to her private illnesses and psychic conflicts, she used the device of "the revelation," thus generalizing from herself to mankind. The fact that the whole process was an unconscious one, and that she was genuinely self-deluded, did not prevent solutions which were not solutions at all from being formalized and solidified into dogma. Her followers, also seeking solutions for their own ailments or unhappiness, found either the necessary faith

required for their own self-healing, or else sufficient temporary surcease from clinical symptoms to insure their fidelity to the Adventist cause.

To many readers, the pathology in Ellen White will be apparent without further elucidation. But Professor Numbers never labels her as either pathological or as self-deluded. He is content to describe her, and to give us the background of frenetic health reform which provided her with nurture as important as that of her supporting mother. We do see her at her most absurd—when she attacks the long skirts "sweeping up the filth of the streets" as "devised by Satan," and when she warns that anyone wearing hairpieces risks "horrible disease and premature death" (pp. 146, 148). But we also see a compulsively dedicated woman with formidable administrative skills and a sense of mission that brought remarkable consequences. When one reads about her success in starting a worldwide system of medical missions and hospitals, and the continuing services performed by the Adventist groups, one is astonished again that it took so long for Ellen G. White to be written about by an able and dispassionate biographer.

IV. The State of A Church's Soul

Review by Ernest R. Sandeen

Ronald L. Numbers' biographical essay is at the same time a valuable work of social history, a moving personal document and a report on the state of one American denomination's soul. As a historian of American social and religious history, I have appreciated this chance to share in another historian's discoveries. Ronald Numbers' account of Ellen White conforms to the highest canons of historical craftsmanship, and his narrative seems free of special pleading or

bias. His is a mature work of great value outside Adventist circles.

All of the elements which constituted Ellen White's historical environment have been familiar to historians of that epoch—millenarian expectations, health reform faddism, Graham diet, sexual theories, water cures, even direct visions and revelations. It is fascinating, however, to see how each of these elements combined in Mrs. White's own history and how she reacted to them. Numbers does violence neither to Mrs. White or to the general forces at work in the midnineteenth century, but allows us to see Ellen White's own completely individual and idiosyncratic reaction to these forces without depicting her as a puppet or the events as a card-

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