

interest and the Adventist understanding of the nature of man (theological anthropology)? . . . the process of salvation by grace through faith (soteriology)? . . . the end of present history with the second coming of God in the person of Christ (eschatology)? . . . the meaning and experience of the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship? What part does the subject of health play in the total concept of "the great controversy," which is the central systematic theme of Adventist theology?

Finally, there is a need for a comprehensive theological synthesis of Ellen White's views of health as a dimension of religious life and as a concern of the church. Besides the first slender books that get most of Numbers' attention—*An Appeal to Mothers* (1864) and the collection of pamphlets entitled *How to Live* (1865)—she published numerous articles on health in various journals. Toward the end of her career came the systematic elaboration of her thought published as *The Ministry of Healing* (1903), and there

have been several posthumous compilations of both previously published and unpublished materials—*Counsels on Health* (1932), *Medical Ministry* (1930), *Counsels on Diet and Foods* (1938) and *Temperance* (1949). By way of secondary sources, first Dores E. Robinson's *The Story of Our Health Message* (1943) and now Numbers' *Prophetess of Health* (1976) have provided historical narratives. But *The Ministry of Healing* is not sufficiently comprehensive, the compilations are not sufficiently coherent, and the narratives are not sufficiently theological to give the church a clear, complete and integrated understanding of the whole of Ellen White's writings on health.

To the extent that *Prophetess of Health* functions as an encouragement to these kinds of further historical study and theological interpretation, its publication can be a significant and constructive event as the church grows into a more complete understanding of the prophetic mission and ministry of Ellen G. White.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. An example here is Francis D. Nichol's extensive consideration and documentation of Ellen White's relation to the "shut door" theology, in *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1951), pp. 161-252, 586-615, and 619-43. There is also a less elaborate discussion by Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question* (Washington: Ellen G. White Estate, 1971).

Numbers is aware of these materials (see p. 218, n. 50, and p. xii), but he does not comment on them.

2. Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry: A Defense of the Character and Conduct of William Miller and the Millerites* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1944), pp. 12-13.

3. Kenneth H. Wood, "Hear the Word of the Lord," a

Bible study presented at the 1975 General Conference session in Vienna and published in the *Review and Herald*, July 16, 1975, p. 11.

4. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 1 (Washington: Review and Herald, 1958), p. 37.

5. This approach to the issue at hand derives from a conversation with Warren C. Trenchard of Canadian Union College at College Heights, Alberta.

6. See Everett F. Harrison, "The Phenomena of Scripture," in *Revelation and the Bible*, edited by Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), pp. 238-50.

7. Wood, "Hear the Word of the Lord," p. 11. See also his editorial, "The Divine-Human Word," *Review and Herald*, June 24, 1976, pp. 2, 14-15.

VII. An Author Replies To His Critics

by Ronald L. Numbers

First, I want to thank the editors of SPECTRUM for giving me this opportunity to respond to my reviewers. Although I am partic-

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ularly appreciative of the comments of Norwood, Brodie and Sandeen, most of what I say will be directed toward the criticisms of the White Estate, Schwarz and Guy, which raise serious questions about the quality and reliability of my work.

The Estate's allegations are not new. In February 1975, it provided me with an extensive

paragraph-by-paragraph critique of my then unpublished manuscript. Assisted by Richard W. Schwarz and Ron Graybill, whom the White Estate sent to Wisconsin to confer with me, I carefully evaluated its arguments and evidence and revised my manuscript accordingly. Thus, before the publication of *Prophetess of Health*, I was able to incorporate the Estate's criticisms that I felt were valid. The present review raises few new issues. It is, as the Estate points out, a condensation of a recently published 24-page pamphlet, which is a lineal descendant of the 1975 critique prepared largely by Ron Graybill, Robert Olson and Arthur White of the Estate staff.

The points of contention, then and now, are primarily interpretative rather than factual. The Estate believes that there is objective evidence to substantiate the claim that Mrs. White was divinely inspired. It maintains, for example, that her ventilation of a sickroom in response to a vision "goes far toward supporting her claims that her light came from the Lord, not from physicians." But this kind of "evidence," I am afraid, is unacceptable to the historian. Although I personally do not deny the possibility that Mrs. White was inspired by God, I think that appeals to supernatural explanations are out of place in strictly historical studies like *Prophetess of Health*. Furthermore, I am not aware of any historical evidence for her inspiration besides her own claims, which, I believe, must be accepted primarily on the basis of faith.

The Estate singles out as "the crux of the matter" the question "Did Ellen White receive her health message from the Lord or from earthly sources?" But this is a question the historian, *qua* historian, cannot answer. It is unfair to ask him to do so or to fault him for not doing so. The Estate also claims that to write about a prophet one must have "a correct and adequate concept of inspiration." I disagree. That requirement would virtually limit the writing of Adventist history to members of the church, and it sounds too much like saying that only a devout Roman Catholic should write about the pope or that only a Communist should write about Lenin.

Despite its criticism of "unsupported assumptions," the Estate makes two crucial ones of its own: that Ellen White was inspired and that her testimony is generally accurate. It believes *a priori* that naturalistic explanations of her

visions and testimonies are wrong and that evidence of her inaccuracy is invalid. Thus, those who harbor such views must possess a faulty methodology or be Satanically inspired—or both. (It is ironic that Adventists praise Fawn Brodie's excellent biography of Joseph Smith while damning attempts to apply the same methods to understanding Ellen White.)

I agree wholeheartedly with the Estate that "the truth can be approached only by a conscientious and thoughtful investigation of *all* the available evidence on all sides of a question." But why, if this is its philosophy, does it continue to restrict access to so many of Ellen White's manuscripts and to prohibit the use of others? Why did it repeatedly withhold requested documents—and on one occasion even deny the existence of a key manuscript locked in the Estate vault and instruct its staff not to mention its discovery? Why, too, if it desires to facilitate access to the evidence, does it prohibit researchers from taking notes while working in the Estate's collections and require them to submit all release requests to two committees of church elders for approval? But these are separate issues.

In my study of Ellen White I say that "by June of 1863 Seventh-day Adventists were already in possession of the main outlines of the health reform message. What they now needed to become a church of health reformers was not additional information, but a sign from God indicating his pleasure" (p. 81). The White Estate claims this is not true, but in proving its case it distorts what I said. First, it incorrectly identifies "message" rather than "outlines" as the "key word" of my statement; then it arbitrarily defines message as "a coherent body of information with a purpose." Since SDAs did not possess "a coherent body of information with a purpose" before June 1863, the Estate, apparently forgetting what I actually wrote, concludes I am wrong.

The Estate also cites evidence, which I allegedly overlooked or suppressed, showing that even those Adventists who knew about health reform continued to practice their old habits. However, my statement clearly refers to their *knowledge* rather than their *practice* of health reform, and the evidence is abundant that many Adventists knew about health reform before the

June 5 vision. Mrs. White herself said that in the months after her vision she was “often” asked about the similarity between her views and those of Trall, Jackson and others. If Adventists knew as little about health reform as the Estate would have us believe, then how does it explain the widespread and detailed familiarity with the writings of Trall and Jackson?

Besides, it is logically fallacious to suppose a necessary relationship between knowledge and practice, as the Estate seems to do. The lapses of the Kelloggs, Loughboroughs and Andrewses reveal as little about their knowledge of health reform as Mrs. White’s continued use of meat until 1894 tells us about what she knew. Using the Estate’s reasoning, we would conclude that her knowledge of vegetarianism was only fragmentary until the 1890s, three decades after God revealed to her the evils of meat-eating. My point was that the content of Mrs. White’s June 5 vision was not new, even to many Adventists. And nothing the Estate has presented refutes that.

The Estate says that *Prophetess of Health* “offers the reader none of the facts cited here which show that . . . early Adventists continued to use therapy and indulge in practices which most health reformers of the day would have abhorred.” This simply is not true. Though more concerned with familiarity than with habits, I did, for example, mention the Kelloggs’ use of beer and ale (p. 221) and Bates’ reticence to discuss his views on health reform (p. 38)—which raises an interesting question: How did James White know that Bates only discussed his dietary views when “interrogated upon the subject” if he never interrogated the captain?

What did Mrs. White know? In *Prophetess of Health* I argue that even Mrs. White knew more about hydropathy and health reform before June 1863 than she liked to admit. I specifically cite her successful use of Jackson’s water treatment for diphtheria during the winter of 1862-63 and her undisputed familiarity with articles on reform appearing in the *Review*. The authors of the Estate review, wanting to attribute all her knowledge to the vision, minimize her acquaintance with health reform, which leads them, it appears, into an unsuspected trap.

To show how little the Whites knew about health reform in 1863, the Estate refers to Henry’s fatal illness in December 1863, when his

desperate parents called in a local physician. “Is it not strange,” it asks, “that she [Mrs. White] failed to use her supposed ‘system of medicine’ to save the life of her own son?” Yes, indeed it is—for two reasons. First, the Estate seems to have forgotten that Henry’s death occurred six months *after* the June 5 vision, when God had shown her “the remedial value of water treatments” [W. C. White, *Review and Herald*, 113 (Nov. 12, 1936), 4]. Thus, if she did not use water treatments, it was not Jackson’s system she was ignoring; it was God’s. Second, the Estate’s assertion that the Whites “stood helplessly by while their boy died” is an unwarranted assumption based on the absence of evidence. We simply do not know what the Whites did besides calling a physician, and it seems likely that they would have tried every remedy, including water, which had proved so successful the previous winter and which God had recently endorsed.

In its review, the Estate attempts to demonstrate that Mrs. White’s views on health came from the Lord, as she claimed, and not from earthly sources. It seems to think that if she were not indebted to human predecessors, her chances of being divinely inspired are increased. But in so reasoning, the Estate fails to recognize that many uninspired authors have written original works. Even if Mrs. White were unique, it would add no *historical* evidence to her claim of inspiration.

The only historical question in this section relates to the accuracy of Mrs. White’s denial that she had read “*The Laws of Life* and other publications of Drs. Trall, Jackson and others,” before writing out her June 5 vision. To justify this statement, the Estate unfortunately paints a picture of the prophetess as a master casuist, deliberately misleading her questioners while technically telling the truth. When the people asked if she had read the “works” of Trall and Jackson, they were obviously trying to find out if she were acquainted with their views, regardless of the source. But, according to the Estate, Mrs. White cleverly took “works” to mean just “books,” which enabled her to deny any familiarity with previous health reformers without actually lying. It would be less damning simply to admit that she was mistaken.

The Estate concedes that she had indeed read some brief selections from the health reformers,

but suggests that “in the flood of light provided by the vision, any fainter glimmers paled into insignificance in her mind.” Surely, the Estate’s rules of evidence do not permit an assumption of such magnitude. The Estate also admits that Mrs. White incorrectly gave the date when her husband ordered books from Dansville, but passes it off as a minor biographical error, not recognizing that the important question is *why* she made this particular mistake. The main point, it says, is that she did not read the books; but this is another assumption, based solely on her own testimony, which, because of the possibility of self-interest, is suspect as historical evidence.

If I have read the Estate correctly, its current answer to the question, “Did Mrs. White copy?” is “Yes, but it’s not really important.” Surprisingly, the Estate does not seem to be nearly as concerned about the instances of outright copying as in trying to show Mrs. White’s lack of familiarity with the literature before 1865. Thus, it divides the alleged examples of copying into two categories: those before 1865, when according to her own testimony she began reading books on health reform, and those afterwards. Since most of the pre-1865 parallels found so far concern tea, coffee, or tobacco—topics about which she was knowledgeable before June 1863—the Estate believes they are not significant. As for the post-1865 parallels, the Estate says that “it is not surprising that since Mrs. White found these men to be ‘so nearly in harmony’ with what the Lord had revealed to her she would occasionally employ their language in later years when writing on the same subjects.” Perhaps it would not be so surprising if Mrs. White (and the Estate) had not repeatedly insisted on her literary independence.

The Estate seeks to minimize the importance of the post-1865 parallel passages by arguing that they were limited to “a few cases,” that she was not trying to fool anyone, and that plagiarism in the nineteenth century was not the heinous crime that it is today. But, as they well know, we are not talking about “a few cases.” Despite the difficulty of detecting literary dependence, we already know that she borrowed extensively in her health writings, in *Sketches*

from the *Life of Paul*, and in *The Great Controversy*. Virtually entire chapters from *The Great Controversy* were extracted—historical errors and all—directly from other books.

Since Mrs. White borrowed from sources familiar to many of her readers, it does seem unlikely that she was *consciously* trying to fool anyone. For that reason, I have consistently refrained from accusing her of plagiarism, which implies a conscious attempt to deceive. Before this issue can be resolved, we need to know much more about the unconscious processes that may have been operating.

In the meantime, it is inaccurate for the Estate to suggest that nineteenth-century Adventists and other Americans winked at plagiarism. In a note on “plagiarism” in the September 6, 1864 issue of the *Review and Herald*, the editors accuse a woman named Luthera B. Weaver of stealing lines from one of Annie Smith’s poems and publishing them as her own. Plagiarism, they say, “is a word that is used to signify ‘literary theft,’ or the taking the productions of another and passing them off as one’s own. . . . We are perfectly willing that pieces from the *Review*, or any of our books should be published to any extent, and all we ask is, that simple justice be done us, by due credit being given.” If Mrs. White had only adopted this principle, she would have avoided much needless criticism.

The Estate argues in its review that I consistently put Mrs. White “in an embarrassing or unfavorable light,” the implication being that I have done so unfairly. In other words, if Mrs. White looks bad, it is a result of my distortions, not her actions.

To illustrate my tendency to omit contradictory material, the Estate points to my discussion of the events surrounding James White’s “retirement” from the editorship of the *Review* in 1855, claiming that I either misread or omitted important evidence. In contrast to the controversies I describe, the Estate has White “happily” stepping down from the editorship. But—as I am sure any objective reader will concede—there is much more to the story, a crucial element being White’s attitude toward his wife’s “gift.” His October outburst may not have led directly to his departure, but the views expressed in it certainly influenced the committee that appointed Uriah Smith as his successor. For

what it's worth, I am not alone in adopting this interpretation. In a still unpublished paper Dr. Dalton Baldwin, of the Loma Linda University Division of Religion, concludes that "it would seem that the policy of the *Review* [under James White] in not using the writings of Ellen G. White except on the human level fits the description of the condition that the committee felt displeased God."

The Estate misrepresents my account of this episode when it implies that I intentionally ignored other reasons than White's controversial attitude toward the visions for his leaving the editorship. I specifically stated that "in recent months he had come to fear that his editorial burdens were threatening his health, and he had publicly expressed a desire to relinquish his position" (p. 29).

The Estate also criticizes me for making a number of "unsupported" assumptions, which I suppose means that my assumptions are often unwarranted. It also finds it "unfortunate that a book so largely footnoted would . . . frequently employ such terms as 'doubtless,' 'ostensibly' and 'probably' in its interpretation of various events." However, I find it hard to believe that the Estate would be happier without the qualifications.

The Estate offers five examples of unsupported assumptions. First, it says that I erroneously assumed that the "whining complaints" and "poisonous letters" James White received in 1855 pertained to his attitude toward his wife's visions. Yet, they assume that the letters concerned "his handling of the financial affairs of the office." Since the letters in question are not extant, we are unable to settle the issue with finality. I suspect that we are both correct, that the complaints criticized him for his administration as well as for his views on the visions. But perhaps it would be best for neither of us to make assumptions.

Second, the Estate censures me for suggesting the following interpretation of Mrs. White's warnings against excesses of the marriage relation: "Although she never defined exactly what she meant by excessive, it seems likely—since she generally agreed with earlier health reformers in such matters—that she would have frowned on having intercourse more frequently than once a

month" (pp. 157-58). It is "unrealistic," the Estate says, to have so little sex. I agree, but it's beside the point.

The Estate admits that Mrs. White never explicitly defined what she meant by marital excess; thus they concede that no evidence contradicts my interpretation. And some important evidence supports it. In *Solemn Appeal Relative to Solitary Vice, and the Abuses and Excesses of the Marriage Relation* (1870), an expanded edition of Mrs. White's earlier *Appeal to Mothers* (1864) edited by James White, we find this advice by O. S. Fowler: ". . . to indulge, even in wedlock, as often as the moon quarters [i.e., twice a month], is gradual but effectual destruction of both soul and body." Why did James White select this passage to accompany his wife's inspired views on the marriage relation? Again, we cannot be sure, but one analagous explanation seems plausible. We know the material appended to *Appeal to Mothers* was included because it was "corroborative of the views presented [by Mrs. White] in the preceding pages." And the excerpts added to *How to Live* (1865) were included because Mrs. White found them to be "so nearly in harmony with what the Lord had revealed." Is it unreasonable to think that Fowler's statement was included for the same reasons?

Third, the Estate rejects my explanation of Mrs. White's 1851 comment that "the visions trouble many." In *Prophetess of Health*, I wrote that "some" Adventists were "doubtless" puzzled by "her changing stand on the shut door, while others resented her habit of publishing private testimonies revealing their secret sins—and names" (pp. 27-28). The Estate points out that *Christian Experience and Views*, the book from which her shut-door passages were deleted, did not appear until after her comment about the visions, and it asserts that she did not publish "any testimonies containing even the initials of those to whom the counsel was directed" until years later. (My italics.)

Though it is true that *Christian Experience and Views* appeared in 1851 a few weeks or months after Mrs. White's comment, this does not mean, as the Estate suggests, that until the publication of this volume no one was aware of her changing views on the shut door. Even the Estate concedes that she had been publicly advocating an open-door policy for some time

before publishing *Christian Experience and Views*.

The Estate does, however, have some legitimate grounds for criticizing my reference to Mrs. White's "habit of publishing private testimonies." I should not have used the word "habit." Nevertheless, it is true despite what the Estate maintains, that she published testimonies exposing individual errors before 1851; see, for instance, her reproof of Brother Rhodes in the *Present Truth*, 1 (Dec., 1849), p. 35. But I must admit that this practice did not become habitual until later. Then, however, she published names, not just initials, as the Estate implies. To pick one of many possible examples, her very personal testimony "Extremes in Health Reform" (now found in *Testimonies*, II, pp. 377-90) originally appeared with the erring brethren, H. C. Miller and H. S. Giddings of Monroe, Wisconsin, plainly identified by name and residence.

More important, even if Mrs. White was not habitually *publishing* private revelations of sins by 1851, she certainly was *publicizing* them, which seems ample reason for dissatisfaction. (See, e.g., *Life Sketches*, pp. 85-94, 129-35.) In *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. II (1860), p. 294, she wrote:

In bearing the testimony which the Lord has given me for the last fifteen years [since 1844], I have been opposed by many who became my bitter enemies, especially those whose errors and sins have been revealed to me, and have been exposed by me. Some of these have carried out their feelings of revenge, as might be expected, in attacking the humble instrument, and circulating unfavorable reports against me.

Thus, although my language was imperfect, my sentiment was sound.

Fourth, the Estate apparently sees no valid reason for devoting "half a chapter to the most minute details of Ellen White's efforts to encourage dress reform and only a few sentences to her role in the establishment of health care facilities like Loma Linda University." The explanation is simple. We often learn as much from failures as from successes and, according to Mrs. White herself, "perhaps no question has ever come up among us which has caused such development of character as has dress reform." This alone is sufficient justification for discussing it at length.

But there are additional reasons. She was much more directly involved with dress reform than she was with the turn-of-the-century sanitarium building, and her dress reform activities shed more light on her connection with the health reform movement than does institutional growth, important as that may have been.

Fifth, the Estate has directed some of its strongest criticism against my statement that Mrs. White in 1906 "vetoed a chance to obtain the rights to . . . Corn Flakes" (p. 189). According to it, I "not only misread completely the evidence, but also [engaged] in some speculation for which it is difficult to see any basis at all." Correspondence from that time, the Estate

"The Estate finds in 'the demonstrably better health' of Adventists evidence of Mrs. White's inspiration. Does the better health of Mormons tell anything about Joseph Smith's inspiration?"

says, makes it "very plain" that "Mrs. White could not have vetoed a chance for the denomination to acquire the rights to Corn Flakes because such a chance was never offered." But it chooses to overlook Mrs. White's own testimony. Writing to J. A. Burden in November 1906, she said:

In regard to the health food business, I would urge you to move slowly. Dr. Kellogg's proposition to sell the corn flake rights to our people for twenty years has just been considered by our brethren here; and I fear, if I had not been on the ground, this matter would have been carried through to the loss of our food business. When a thing is exalted, as the corn flakes has been, it would be unwise for our people to have anything to do with it. It is not necessary that we make the corn flakes an article of food.

From this letter, it is clear that Mrs. White understood that Kellogg had made an offer, that he had made it to "our people," and that she was the one responsible for not accepting it. In view of this, how can the Estate say that I have

“misread completely the evidence”? And how does it explain not even mentioning this letter in its discussions of the corn flake episode?

Concerning progression in Mrs. White’s teachings, the main difference between the Estate and me is not over the presence of change—though they prefer to call it “progression”—but in explaining it. I offer historical explanations; the Estate appeals “to the *fact* that God was leading His people along, step by step, as they accepted and lived up to the counsel.” (My italics.) This is not a *fact* as the term is commonly understood; it is an assumption based on personal faith.

Despite the numerous changes in Mrs. White’s inspired writings, the Estate accepts her contention that “nothing is ignored; nothing is cast aside.” But how then are we to explain her absolute rejection of the reform dress in the 1870s, or her repudiation in the 1850s of her 1849 admonition never to resort to earthly physicians? In its 24-page critique of *Prophetess of Health*, the Estate attributes the latter to “the fact that the youthful Ellen White did not always in those early days make herself entirely clear.” Perhaps so, but this explanation severely undercuts her claim that she was “just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision, as in having the vision.”

In remarks calling for “candor without condescension,” the Estate maintains that I have failed to “explain the historical dynamics of her success,” but what really concerns it, I think, is that I have not dealt with the supernatural dynamics, to which the Estate attributes virtually all her accomplishments. Throughout *Prophetess of Health*, I offer a number of possible explanations for her appeal and her success. In the first chapter, I allude to her personal ambition (p. 21) and point out that “despite her occasional inconsistency and insensitivity, most members clung to the belief that she represented a divine channel of communication. To them, dramatic visions, supernatural healings and revelations of secret sins were persuasive evidences of a true prophet” (p. 30). I also give considerable emphasis to the roles of James White and J. H. Kellogg. “Seventh-day Adventism,” I say, “would not have been the same without Ellen White; it would not have existed without James” (p. 182). Frankly, I suspect that

without James, Ellen today would be remembered only as another Portland visionary of the shut-door persuasion. And without Kellogg, I doubt if the Adventist medical work would ever have gotten off the ground. By the 1870s, he was already beginning “to eclipse the prophetess as the church’s health authority” (p. 169P), and during the last quarter of the century, when Mrs. White’s interest in health reform waned, he almost singlehandedly kept the Adventist health reform movement alive.

The Estate finds in “the demonstrably better health” of Adventists evidence of Mrs. White’s inspiration. But is it willing to grant that the demonstrably better health of Mormons tells us anything about Joseph Smith’s inspiration?

What should we conclude from all this? As the Estate says, my study of Ellen White “does not stand or fall on one or two errors of fact or interpretation; it stands or falls on whether its major theses are sustained by the overall weight of evidence.” Judged by this criterion—or by the criterion of accuracy—my study stands. The most the Estate has found, after investing two years and thousands of dollars checking every phrase and source of my study, is that on p. 216, note 32, I inadvertently give the date of Merritt Kellogg’s letter as June 3 rather than June 18, 1906, and that my statement that Mrs. White was in the “habit of publishing private testimonies” by 1851 represents a poor choice of words. The remainder of the Estate’s allegations are, I believe, either factually inaccurate or dependent on appeals to supernatural explanations.

Since the appearance of an August 2 *Time* article mentioning that Mrs. White had a vision showing “that masturbation could lead to ‘imbecility, dwarfed forms, crippled limbs, misshapen hands and deformity of every description,’” various church leaders have argued that I erroneously attributed these problems to masturbation, when Mrs. White in the next sentence describing her vision attributes them to “sins and crimes, and the violation of nature’s laws.” Thus, I am accused of taking the statement out of context. Unfortunately, my critics seem to be overlooking the remainder of the disputed paragraph, in which Mrs. White makes very clear just what sins and crimes she is talking about.

On pages 17 and 18 of *An Appeal to Mothers: The Great Cause of the Physical*,

Mental, and Moral Ruin of Many of the Children of Our Time (1864), Mrs. White writes the following:

The state of our world was presented before me, and my attention was especially called to the youth of our time. Everywhere I looked, I saw imbecility, dwarfed forms, crippled limbs, misshapen heads, and deformity of every description. Sins and crimes, and the violation of nature's laws, were shown me as the causes of this accumulation of human woe and suffering. I saw such degradation and vile practices, such defiance of God, and I heard such words of blasphemy, that my soul sickened. From what was shown me, a large share of the youth now living are worthless. Corrupt habits are wasting their energies, and bringing upon them loathsome and complicated diseases. Unsuspecting parents will try the skill of one physician after another, who prescribe drugs, when they generally know the real cause of the failing health, but for fear of offending and losing their fees, they keep silent, when as faithful physicians they should expose the real cause. Their drugs only add a second great burden for abused nature to struggle against, which often breaks down in her efforts, and the victim dies. And the friends look upon the death as a mysterious dispensation of providence, when the most mysterious part of the matter is, that nature bore up as long as she did against her violated laws. Health, reason and life, were sacrificed to depraved lust.

I have been shown that children who practice self-indulgence previous to puberty, or the period of merging into manhood and womanhood, must pay the penalty of nature's violated laws at that critical period.

To anyone familiar with the medical language and literature of the mid-nineteenth century, Mrs. White's message is clear: the practice of masturbation will result in "imbecility, dwarfed forms, crippled limbs, misshapen heads, and deformity of every description."

Strangely, as I read the White Estate's review, I found myself empathizing with the authors. They sincerely regard *Prophetess of Health* as a deceptively well-documented study, the conclusions of which are based on arbitrarily selected evidence, unwarranted assumptions and

distortions, if not outright misrepresentations. I feel precisely the same way about their critique. Their fondest hope is that "every reader of *Prophetess of Health* would examine carefully and take into account the whole record before reaching conclusions." My hope is that every reader of the Estate's critique will carefully read and evaluate my study and this response before reaching a conclusion.

Richard W. Schwarz is deservedly one of the most respected historians in Adventist circles. He is also a friend of mine. Thus, I was doubly disappointed by his review, which in places is unfair both to me and, I fear, to himself. His introductory comments on the writing of contemporary history, for example, sometimes caricature rather than clarify the art. While it is true that historians no longer harbor the illusion of writing totally objective history, the best ones I know try nevertheless to be as objective (i.e., fair and factually accurate) as humanly possible. They do not arbitrarily pick a thesis and then go out looking for evidence to support it.

I find his defense of supernatural revelation equally unconvincing, though I admire his valiant efforts to rescue Mrs. White from some embarrassing situations. His suggestions that multiple inspiration might explain her literary indebtedness to others, that her "borrowings" may simply be a reflection of God's method of communication, and that her blanket denials of earthly influences on her health writings were "literary hyperbole" rank with the best of F. D. Nichol's apologies. I suspect, however, that if the church accepts these explanations, its doctrine of inspiration will never be the same.

Like the White Estate, at whose request he originally prepared four-fifths of his review, Schwarz expresses doubts about the reliability of my methods. This certainly is fair, but several errors and misstatements should be cleared up. I did not, as Schwarz suggests, set out "to prove" the influence of nineteenth-century health reformers on Mrs. White's ideas. I discovered the parallels between their writings and hers and then described them in good Rankian fashion. Even Gottschalk, I think, would admit that such parallels in expression constitute convincing evidence of intellectual indebtedness.

Schwarz states that I occasionally use what

he considers to be hyperbole, overly broad generalizations, and poor witnesses, but some of his allegations are without any basis at all. He charges me with overgeneralizing in saying that the Millerite movement caused some cases of insanity. But all I said was that it “*allegedly* [drove] some distraught souls to suicide or insanity” (p. 12). He takes me to task for writing that poor health was “the *‘one constant’* during Ellen White’s early difficult years.” (My italics). But I did not say that. I wrote that “through the years of uncertainty and hardship one constant in Ellen White’s life was poor health” (p. 31).

By far the most potentially damaging of Schwarz’s criticisms concern my allegedly irresponsible use of the testimony of former Adventists who rejected Mrs. White’s claim to divine inspiration: H. E. Carver, D. M. Canright, Frank Belden, Merritt Kellogg and J. H. Kellogg. Similarly, the White Estate in its 24-page critique claims that I consistently give “preferential treatment” to such hostile witnesses.

The unsuspecting reader would no doubt conclude from these observations that my study of Mrs. White rests heavily on an uncritical use of these sources. But such is not the case. A quick count shows that *Prophetess of Health* contains roughly 1,185 citations: 31.7 percent from Mrs. White herself, 32.9 percent from traditional Adventist sources, 31.5 percent from neutral historical documents and a mere 3.9 percent from what might be called persons hostile to the prophetess. Thus, nearly two-thirds of my documentation comes from decidedly pro-Ellen White materials.

But more important than the number of my references to hostile witnesses is the use I made of them. Over half of all the citations to such sources appear in my last chapter, where I discuss the Battle Creek schism. To understand the difficulties that perplexed the Battle Creek brethren, no sources are more pertinent than their own words. This leaves approximately 20 citations from critics in the first seven chapters: Carver (7), J. H. Kellogg (7), Canright (3), M. Kellogg (2) and Belden (1). Except in one instance, the citations to Carver, Canright and Belden refer either to the words or opinions of other persons, not to the views of the critics themselves. And in the one exception (note 20,

p. 238) I pointedly *reject* Canright’s claim that Mrs. White wrote *Testimony No. 12* to justify her husband’s tearing down of the sanitarium. As for J. H. Kellogg, I question his veracity (pp. 120-21), say that he occasionally “had a tendency to embroider” the truth (p. 250), and refer to him as “the sometimes haughty czar of the Adventist medical institutions” (p. 101). This hardly seems like preferential treatment.

Whenever I accepted the testimony of a critic over an apologist, I did so for good reason. One example will suffice. The White Estate in its pamphlet criticizes me for relying on M. Kellogg rather than J. N. Loughborough in dating the last of Mrs. White’s visions in 1879 rather than in 1884. The Estate suggests that I arbitrarily chose the version I personally preferred. But the real reason I opted for 1879 was that Kellogg’s account seemed far more convincing than Loughborough’s comment that Mrs. White’s “last open vision” occurred at the Portland, Oregon, camp meeting in 1884. Writing to his brother John on June 18, 1906, Merritt Kellogg said:

When in Australia in 1894, I boarded in Mrs. White’s family, and while with her there I asked her how long since she had a vision. She then told me that she did not know if she had one since her husband died. She said she might have had one in the night at one time when in Portland, Oregon, but she thought it was a dream. She said Sister Ings was with her in Portland at the time.

I saw Sister Ings a few days ago and asked her about it. She knew nothing of Mrs. W. having a vision in Portland, never saw her in vision. I asked W. C. [White] when his mother had the last vision he knew anything of. He said it was in 1879, before his father died.

I was down in Oakland a few days ago and I had an hour’s visit with Sister L. M. Hall. I asked her many questions about her travels and association with Mrs. W., also about Mrs. W.’s visions, and when she had the last one of which Mrs. Hall had any knowledge.

She said that the last one was in 1879 before Brother White’s death.

Given a choice between Loughborough and Kellogg, I think 99 of 100 historians would unhesitatingly pick Kellogg.

Finally, Schwarz wonders why I did “not use the favorable comments of Canright and the two

Kelloggs that exist from the period before they became disenchanted and bitter toward Ellen White.” But here he overlooks the fact that I quote J. H. Kellogg as saying to Mrs. White “I have loved and respected you as my own mother” and that I mention his belief in the scientific accuracy of her testimonies (p. 191).

Fritz Guy finds two positive benefits in my study of Ellen White: a spur to further investigation and an opportunity for him to correct the “theological misunderstandings” of Seventh-day Adventists regarding inspiration. Other than that, he seems to have little regard for what I have done, believing it to be fundamentally imbalanced, one-sided and biased.

Unlike the White Estate and Schwarz, who are at least specific in their criticisms, Guy prefers innuendo, leaving the impression that my work is historically unreliable but never explaining exactly why. He suggests—without providing any supporting evidence—that I have distorted “the ‘shut door’ theology of the 1840s, Mrs. White’s relation to other health reformers and the significance of the health reform vision of 1863, the plan to enlarge the Western Health Reform Institute, the final dispute with J. H. Kellogg, et cetera.” Here, apparently, he is relying uncritically on the widely circulated White Estate critique, which makes the same points.

Frankly, I cannot understand why Guy thinks I have intentionally ignored evidence regarding the shut door but that F. D. Nichol and A. L. White have “done their homework well.” If Nichol deserves such high marks, why did he deliberately suppress the single most important document relating to Mrs. White’s view of the shut door, her 1847 letter to Joseph Bates? (According to one who assisted Nichol in preparing *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, he ignored the letter because it might raise too many questions.) And why did White overlook such crucial documents as Joseph Turner’s *Advent Mirror*, Otis Nichols’ 1846 letter to William Miller, and other early manuscript sources? Surely, Guy should judge Nichol and White by the same standards he applies to me.

The reason I did not deal with the arguments of apologists like Nichol and White in *Prophets of Health* was to avoid polemical debates. It seemed much more constructive simply to write from the historical sources without constantly alluding to my differences with others.

While I am delighted to have Guy (and others) use my study of Ellen White as the occasion for theological reinterpretation, I prefer to leave an evaluation of his insights to others more theologically competent than I. However, I can comment on three historically related points. First, the view that Mrs. White’s pen was “literally guided by God” is not mine, as Guy implies. The credit (or blame) for that opinion belongs to Jerome Clark, who wrote in the second volume of his 1844 trilogy, published by one of the Adventist publishing houses: “Seventh-day Adventists believe that she [Mrs. White] wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that her pen was literally guided by God” (p. 255). Second, it seems premature for Guy to say that the “systematic coherence and conceptual consistency” of Mrs. White’s voluminous writings is “remarkable” when serious analysis has just begun. And finally, I can assure Guy that in the area of health reform Mrs. White’s *differences* from other reformers, taken collectively, were negligible.

It obviously would be self-serving for me to dwell on the essentially favorable reviews of Norwood, Brodie and Sandeen, but I would like to reemphasize a few of the points they make. Norwood’s distinction between the work of a theologian and a historian is absolutely essential. If only this separation of function were appreciated, I believe that nine-tenths of the church’s discomfort with my study would vanish.

Brodie, in discussing the psychodynamic elements in Mrs. White’s life, touches on the most sensitive and unexplored area in Adventist historiography. Although I am not in a position to evaluate her observations, I do think that Adventists should not shy from psychological analyses of the prophetess. If we are truly committed to discovering the truth about Ellen White, we cannot afford to leave any explanation—no matter how unpleasant—untested.

Of all the reviews, Sandeen’s most nearly captures my own feelings. It is not easy to examine critically the beliefs that have given meaning to one’s life. Sometimes the task can be excruciatingly painful, but it is always immensely rewarding. As the Apostle John once said, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).