

Dating the Age of the Earth  
Church Policy on Remarriage

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# SPECTRUM

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A Quarterly Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums

Volume 10, Number 1

1919  
BIBLE  
CONFERENCE



# SPECTRUM

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The Association of Adventist Forums is a nonsubsidized, nonprofit organization for which gifts are deductible in the report of income for purposes of taxation. The pub-

lishing of SPECTRUM donations, gifts from individual efforts of the contribu-

SPECTRUM is published quarterly by the Association of Adventist Forums. Direct editorials, SPECTRUM, Box 431, College Park, Maryland 20740. Senders of style and documentation, SE, *MLA Style Sheet* (rev., 1970). Manuscripts must be double spaced, written, double spaced. Submit the manuscript along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return of space, responses from reviewers, and before publication.

In order to receive SPECTRUM (\$12 per year, except \$14 in Canada and other countries) to Association of Adventist Forums, Takoma Park, Maryland 20012. Send correspondence for \$3.50. Send correspondence to the same address, enclosed by check made out to the Association of Adventist Forums. © 1979. All rights reserved.

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# About this Issue

The editors are pleased that the first editor of SPECTRUM, Doctor Molleurus Couperus, is introducing in this issue material never before published. On July 30 and August 1, 1919, Adventist Bible and history teachers met with General Conference and other church leaders to discuss the role of Ellen White's writings in Adventist theology, education and practice. Because the editors believe that the discussions taking place 60 years ago remain important and in fact deal with many of the same issues of concern discussed within the church today, we have devoted half of this issue of SPECTRUM to the publication of the minutes of these two

meetings. These transcripts, because of their historical significance, are published complete and unedited.

Also, this issue concludes the discussion of science and religion begun in the last issue, "Genesis." Two articles focus on creationism and evolution and upon the use of chronologies. Also, Marvin Moore develops an argument for a shift in church policy concerning remarriage of the divorced, Wayne Judd reviews Charles Scriven's *The Demons Have Had It*, and Douglas Hackleman, in an essay-letter, reacts to Geoffrey Paxton, his tour of America, and our reviews of his *Shaking of Adventism*.

The Editors

# Biblical Creationism After a Century of Scientific Investigation

by Ross O. Barnes

During the middle of the last century, as the Seventh-day Adventist Church was developing its emphasis on the creatorship of God, scientists and philosophers were developing the theory of evolution. They merged the evolutionary theories current in philosophical thought since the eighteenth century with a concrete, seemingly plausible, scientific causal mechanism and a naturalistic atheism. The theory of evolution challenged the ancient doctrine that a divine being created the universe. This new threat stimulated Christian apologists to define more clearly the consequences of a belief in God as creator. This effort is commonly called Biblical creationism.

Not surprisingly, the development of creationism has proceeded in several directions, each reflecting different understandings of the Bible. Seventh-day Adventists are among those Christians who have been most comfortable with a literal creationism that treats the Genesis story as a framework account of an actual historical

process, though couched in the language and thought of the ancient world. In this paper, I will review the present status of the apologetic aspects of literal creationism after a century of scientific investigation. I will necessarily make reference to the first nine chapters of Genesis, not simply to the creation stories, since we can investigate the record of creation only through the veil of events that shaped and remolded the surface of the earth during the Biblical Flood.

When evaluating competing theories, it is standard practice to focus on those issues where the theories lead to differing predictions or expectations, and to examine which theory conforms best to presently available observations. Many observations fit equally well or poorly into competing explanatory theories; consideration of such data is of little use in choosing the superior theory even though it forms a necessary part of the complete explication of the theory. For example, the observation that most of the sedimentary rock strata were laid down in or by the action of water has been commonly cited as a major confirmation of the Genesis Flood. However, the predominance of water-laid strata is not a corroboration of any one theory as such, but an obvious condition that any adequate theory must explain. It is a mere consequence of our existence on a planet

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where water is the major agent of erosion and deposition.

I will examine three basic areas that are crucial to evaluating the plausibility of literal creationism after a century of scientific research. These areas are (1) the nature of the process responsible for the present and past distribution of life forms on the earth, (2) the nature of the process responsible for creating the earth's present surface features — seas, sediments, mountains, etc., and (3) the length of time involved in the above two processes. These three areas have been the focal points of controversy between literal creationists and secular scientists. The general positions of their opposing models in these three areas are contrasted in the accompanying box.

Now I shall briefly examine some critical evidence that bears directly on the divergences of these two models.

Scientists have shown that biological systems from the ecological to the molecular level depend on a delicate balance from complex structures, mechanisms and interrelationships. Evolutionary biologists have found it difficult, and in many cases impossible, to satisfactorily explain the evolutionary development of many of these complex and delicate systems.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult, for example, to conceive of the development of new or functionally different organs or structural features by slow gradual stages due to selective advantage.

### Literal Creationist Model

- I. **Life.** All living and fossil life forms can be grouped into natural categories that correspond with the created kinds described in Genesis 1. Variability in time and space, adaptation or even the development of genetic incompatibility may occur within these groups. However, the groups maintain their distinctiveness from one another in time and space, due probably to inherent biological, biochemical and physiological factors.
- II. **Geological record.** The historical clues left in the earth provide evidence of a major cataclysm in the earth's past that completely changed the earth's surface — the causal agents being an overwhelming flood, violent volcanism, rapid crustal deformation, etc.
- III. **Time.** The available historical clues should indicate that the appearance and history of life and the deposition of the rock strata that enclose their fossil remains are relatively recent events, on the order of thousands of years.

### Standard Secular Model

- I. **Life.** All life forms, past and present, originated, at most, from a few relatively simple types through a process of gradual differentiation and development. The fossil record of life provides a history of this process showing how the various floral and faunal groups developed through successive gradual stages. Although certain intermediate types may not be presently living, they once existed and a significant number should be found as fossils at least in those groups of flora and fauna well represented by fossil forms.
- II. **Geological Record.** The sedimentary strata reveal a series of floral and faunal communities that lived on the earth over a period of time. Each successive community was built on the sediment that buried the earlier community.
- III. **Time.** The historical clues concerning duration of these events suggest that the history of life on earth and the creation of the earth's present crustal features required a very long time period, on the order of millions/billions of years.

Several illustrations commonly cited include feathers, eyes, divergent biochemical systems and the evolution of metamorphosing developmental sequences.

Another problem concerns the common selective disadvantage of significantly large mutations. Most mutations that structurally or functionally modify an organism in ways potentially useful to the evolutionary hypothesis have widespread systematic effects that ultimately endanger an organism's survival. This is in direct contrast to what the evolutionary hypothesis requires.

Still another problem concerns the limits to adaptive change. All well-documented evidence concerning the changes organisms undergo in response to both natural and artificial selective pressures only shows the ability of a population to adapt to a changing environment. Selective breeding experiments have also demonstrated that definite limits exist beyond which adaptive change

**“The fossil record provides little support for literal creationism, except as negative evidence. . . . Literal creationists have not readily grasped this situation.”**

does not occur.<sup>2</sup> All well-documented or accepted examples of natural adaptive radiation of species — for instance, the occurrences on isolated islands (Galapagos finches, Hawaiian honeycreepers) — involve no more basic variation of the original parent stock than has been achieved through the efforts of human breeders on such domesticated animals as dogs.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, biology has been unable to demonstrate the probable mechanism or even plausibility of evolution between major groups (macroevolution).

Since, however, evolution is a historical process, its success as an explanation for the origin of life forms stands or falls on its con-

firmation or refutation from the actual historical record of life. If macroevolution has occurred, its general progression should be relatively easy to outline, for the preserved record of life (fossils), however fragmentary and limited, provides a wealth of information about many major floras and faunas. We find, however, that the task of tracing supposed macroevolutionary lineages has progressed not at all in the past 100 years. There seem to be no good clues to the evolutionary relationships of the major groups (phyla) of the animal and plant kingdoms. A similar situation generally exists for the major subdivisions of these phyla. No commonly accepted or even reasonably probable scheme of macroevolution has been worked out. New major types of flora or fauna frequently appear at some point in the stratigraphic succession with no apparent relationship to forms previously present.

In recognition of this situation, a number of modern paleontologists are discarding those evolutionary “family” trees that have been familiar pictorial devices of paleontological literature.<sup>4</sup>

Even Charles Darwin realized that his theory lacked support from the fossil record; he appealed to modern examples of microevolution.<sup>5</sup> Since then, biological studies have done little to resolve the problem that the intractable fossil record has posed for evolutionists. If one ignores the philosophical and antitheistic factors that make the macroevolutionary theory attractive to some scientists, it is hard to explain the continued dominance among scientists of a theory that has provided so little concrete assistance in explaining the observed history of life.

On the other hand, the fossil record provides little support for literal creationism, except as negative evidence — the lack of expected support for the evolutionary model. Literal creationists have not readily grasped this situation. If the fossil record is largely a result of the Flood, then the buried remains represent a cross-section of life as it existed just prior to the Flood. The noncontinuity of fossil life forms has no positive significance for literal creationism since one does not expect a continuity of forms to exist on the earth at any one instant in time.

During the formative years of the earth sciences in the 1800s, there was no reliable method of establishing the absolute age of a geological event. Geologists concentrated on determining the relative age or order of rock formation from simple physical relationships and by a procedure known as biostratigraphic correlation. An example of a physical relationship is the intuitive "Law of Superposition" which says that a sedimentary rock formation lying on top of another formation was deposited after the underlying formation unless there is contrary evidence.

Because physical relationships are of little or no use in correlating rocks from widely separated areas, biostratigraphic correlation became the predominant method of assigning relative ages or formation times to sedimentary rock strata. This technique uses "index or guide" fossils (limited to specific intervals of strata) to classify the sedimentary rocks into a relative time sequence.

There is a common misconception in creationist circles that biostratigraphic correlation derives its validity from the evolutionary theory. In fact, the technique originated in the early 1800s about 50 years before Darwin published his *Origin of Species*. William Smith, an English civil engineer, observed that the successive rock layers in the part of England known to him contained distinctly different fossil types.

Biostratigraphic correlation is conceptually and operationally similar to the archaeologists' use of artifacts, particularly pottery, in assigning archaeological strata to various time periods. Index fossils are chosen on an empirical basis (does the system work and is it internally and externally consistent?).

Literal creationist apologists spearheaded in the 1900s by George McCready Price, attempted to discredit biostratigraphic correlation by emphasizing the circularity of the reasoning employed, the lack of an external standard of comparison and (incorrectly) the dependence on evolution for its validity. In emphasizing the definite limitations of the technique, they overlooked the system of checks and balances (internal and external) designed to make the system self-correcting

with time. Most active Adventist creationists have come to recognize that there exists a definite worldwide order to the rock strata and that the observations originally made by William Smith are essentially correct (see discussion below on ecological zonation).

With the discovery of radioactive decay and its inherently stable rate under normal environmental conditions, physicists and geologists recognized the possibility, at least in theory, of measuring the absolute age of geological events and providing an independent standard against which the old relative correlation methods could be compared.

Several recent publications have reviewed radiometric dating methods from a creationist perspective and concluded that the methods yield apparently reliable and consistent ages when utilized properly.<sup>6</sup> If we assume that decay rates are invariant, these ages range into the millions and billions of years. What events in the history of rocks and their mineral substance do these ages date? Can the ages be related to the deposition time of fossiliferous strata?

Fossils themselves are rarely dated and minerals from the enclosing sedimentary strata are rarely suitable for age determinations. Some way must be found to relate radiometric ages of minerals and rocks, quite often of a molten or high temperature origin (igneous and volcanic rocks) to the age of deposition of the fossiliferous strata.

Simple physical and structural relationships can be used to determine the relative formation time of radiometrically dated rocks and nearby fossiliferous strata. For example, see the "Law of Superposition" above. Geochronologists search for locations where fossiliferous rocks of interest are closely bracketed structurally by radiometrically datable rocks. This physical correlation of radiometric dates with fossiliferous strata has generally validated the relative depositional sequence previously worked out by biostratigraphic and physical correlation, thus lending credence to the usefulness of both techniques. Figure 1 shows the system of rock classification with the generally accepted radiometric ages in the right-hand column. In fact, where geological conditions are favorable and extensive dating has been

done, the time scale can be much more detailed than Figure 1.<sup>7</sup>

The most common and potentially serious creationist criticism leveled at radiometric dating concerns the supposed inability to determine how much radiogenic daughter element was present at a particular time in a rock's history and, therefore, how much is due to parent element decay since that time.<sup>8</sup> The latter quantity is needed to calculate a radiometric age. The authors of such criticisms are unaware of, or ignore the fact, that whenever possible, the age-dating techniques are designed to answer this question from experimental data, not guesswork. I would suggest that technically capable and interested readers who have been confused on this matter familiarize themselves with the actual methods used by geochronologists. Several recent books that make good starting points are listed at the end of this paper.<sup>9</sup> The author recently discussed these criticisms before a large audience of Adventist scientists and showed that they could not be substantiated by a careful examination of available literature.<sup>10</sup>

Dating techniques are available in which any real or presumed problems of "excess daughter element" are greatly reduced or

eliminated. Although limited by appropriate occurrences, dating of minerals formed directly in fossiliferous sediments during or after deposition has correlated remarkably well with the age scale developed by more conventional dating of igneous and volcanic rock formations.<sup>11</sup> The recently developed fission track dating method has no inherent excess daughter problem. In fact, the most serious problem would lead to ages too low rather than too high. However, the agreement between these new dates and the previously developed time scale is again very good.<sup>12</sup> Hobbilit and Larson (1975)<sup>13</sup> provide a not untypical example of the agreement achieved in combining physical and biostratigraphic correlation with a variety of radiometric dating methods performed by a number of different persons.

There is a current tendency in Adventist creationist circles to accept the evidence of internal and external consistency in radiometric dating and even the assumption of invariant decay rate, but to assign the measured ages to inorganic matter created during the initial creation as described in Genesis 1:1. This accommodation, of course, relies on the so-called "gap theory" that assigns the original creation of matter and energy to Genesis 1:1 and then a recent ordering of this initial creation during the events de-

Figure 1. Typical classification by contemporary geologists. After Faul.<sup>17</sup>

Era	System or Period	Series or Epoch	Estimated Radiometric Ages of Time Boundaries in Millions of Years*
Cenozoic	Quaternary	Recent	
		Pleistocene	2±1
	Tertiary	Pliocene	7±1
		Miocene	26±1
		Oligocene	38±2
		Eocene	55±2
Mesozoic	Cretaceous	Paleocene	65±2
			135±5
			190±5
Carboniferous	Triassic		225±5
Paleozoic	Permian		270±5
			320±10
			340±10
			400±10
			430±10
			500 (?)
Precambrian	Cambrian		600 (?)

scribed in Genesis 1:2ff. I cannot comment on the exigetical arguments advanced for this theory. However, the use of the gap theory as a means of accommodating radiometric dating to a short geological time scale does not appear to be defensible upon careful examination of actual dating procedures and results and of the structural, physical and chemical principles of rock formation. I do

**“The most consistent and sound theological and scientific position is to question the validity of radiometric dating . . . if the earth has recently experienced a cosmic catastrophe called the flood.”**

not know of any valid and consistent interpretation of available evidence that allows us to make this general separation between a properly determined radiometric age and the formation time of a sedimentary rock, and the burial of its enclosed fossil remains. If a close and detailed examination of this question substantiates this conclusion, those who have followed the “gap theory” of accommodation will be in a predicament. I think that the most consistent and sound theological and scientific position is to question the validity of radiometric dating, especially the assumption of invariant decay rates, in principle, if the earth has recently experienced a cosmic catastrophe called the flood. This position, of course, negates the present possibility of scientific verification since the evidence suggests that radiometric dating is a valid procedure.

**W**e may now turn to the evidence concerning the nature of the major process(es) responsible for depositing the sedimentary rocks found in the crust of the earth. The most plausible current literal creationist model is the “Ecological Zonation Theory.”<sup>14</sup> In brief, it states that a major portion of the sedimentary rocks (with their enclosed fossils) represents the sequence in

which floral and faunal communities living at higher and higher elevations were buried by the rising Flood waters. These waters are presumed to have covered the highest mountains — though not necessarily to have risen as high as our present mountains.<sup>15</sup>

According to this theory, the observed fossil remains that were buried during the Flood represent, in general, a cross-section of plants and animals living at one time before the flood rather than the record of communities that succeeded one another on the surface of the earth over a long period of time. Differences among flora and fauna in the fossil record are due to geographical variations, not evolutionary development in time, thus the name “Ecological Zonation Theory.” Moreover, if the theory is to have any interpretive validity, the various altitudinal zones must have been disturbed and buried more or less simultaneously worldwide and in the same original successive order everywhere. One would expect, on the basis of the ecological zonation theory, that all deposits representing habitats at or near the pre-Flood sea level would occupy approximately the same position in the worldwide sequence of sedimentary rocks and that higher terrestrial zones would dominate above that level.

The standard secular model, on the other hand, suggests that differences in the fossil record are the result of evolutionary changes with time as well as geographical variations. In other words, the sequence represents the entombment of successive communities of organisms — one period of life living on top of the remains of previous periods of life.

I do not think that one has to resort to mountains of complex and obscure data to evaluate the general plausibility of the above models. As in the case of special creation versus evolution, the broad aspects of the geological data serve to support one or the other of the two explanations.

I will attempt to answer in a general fashion two basic questions that emphasize the divergences of literal creationism and standard geological thought. (1) Can the observed sequence of fossil deposits be rationally explained in terms of geographic and ecological variations as predicted by “ecolog-



ical zonation" or does the sequence show progressive changes in floral and faunal types with no definite ecological zonation as predicted by the standard geological model? (2) Do the apparent source areas of sediments seem to fit the ecological zonation model of antediluvian land masses being eroded to higher and higher levels (general source area relatively stationary during deposition of sediments)? Or do the sites of erosion and deposition vary or possibly reverse during a depositional sequence as allowed by standard secular theory?

The best way to approach these questions is to examine the general nature and relationships of sedimentary strata in some large area where these relationships are simple enough to be compassed in a brief presentation. I have chosen the United States between the Appalachian and Sierra Nevada mountains because the structural geology of this region is relatively simple. I will briefly summarize some of the characteristics of the sedimentary sequences in this area that are relevant to our question.<sup>16</sup>

The lower Paleozoic rocks of this region are almost all of shallow water marine origin with a large proportion consisting of carbonates (limestone).<sup>\*</sup> Carbonate rocks represent the accumulated remains of aquatic organisms with carbonate skeletal structures or shells (corals, molluscs, etc.) and/or carbonate removed from waters supersaturated with carbonate minerals. When these rocks were formed, there was apparently no significant land mass in this whole large region.

The upper Paleozoic deposits covering large areas of the central U.S. consist of alternating layers of marine limestone with shallow water fossils, marine and fresh water clays, well-sorted sands and coal beds with vegetation probably derived from low, often swampy forests. Rocks later than Pennsylvanian are essentially absent from the northeast and northcentral part of the U.S. Apparently, this area has been above sea level ever since and subject to continual but not intense erosion.

<sup>\*</sup>When rock strata are called marine or continental, or shallow water; one usually refers to the presumed habitat of the fossils found in the rocks.

Deposition of marine strata continued, however, across the area now called the Great Plains and westward. Rocks next deposited in this region (Lower Mesozoic) generally show the marine strata receding to the west in a belt through Nevada, Utah and Idaho. In the Rocky Mountain region, these deposits are largely derived from land masses rather than marine waters with large sandstone deposits, especially in the southern part of this area. In upper Mesozoic rocks, alternations of marine and nonmarine strata predominate in this region. The Cretaceous strata show such alternations, with coal beds in some respects similar to the Pennsylvanian strata of the eastern and central U.S., except that the fossil types are distinctly different.

**"The task of trying to harmonize Genesis and geology may be akin to generating scientific models to demonstrate the scientific plausibility of Joshua's long day or the virgin birth."**

The end of the Mesozoic essentially marks the end of deposition of strata of marine origin in the western interior U.S. (bounded by the Sierra Nevadas and the Mississippi). Whereas marine waters retreated from the East and Midwest in the late Paleozoic, they were present in the western interior until the end of Mesozoic deposition. At the end of Mesozoic sedimentation, this generally flat country was uplifted, folded and faulted with the formation of the Rocky Mountains. The uplifted areas were subject to relatively rapid erosion. The strata resulting from this erosion contain mammal and land plant fossils and are deposited in a wedge to the east of the mountains and in structural basins within the mountain belt itself.

Sedimentation along the Gulf Coastal Plain followed a somewhat different course than that of the Great Plains and western

regions after the late Paleozoic uplift of the eastern U.S. Sedimentation here exhibits an alternation of shallow water marine deposits and low-coastal-plain, nonmarine deposits suggesting an oscillation of sea level that alternately flooded and exposed this region. Such a depositional environment has apparently continued to the present day.

Based on these data, we can conclude the following: (1) Rocks of shallow marine origin are found from the top to the bottom of the sedimentary section. These shallow water rocks contain fossils of apparently similar habitat (ecology). However, the characteristic fossil forms definitely change as one proceeds from top to bottom. All of these rocks, representing similar source area and depositional environments, can be successfully classified into the sequence of rock systems of Figure 1 by biostratigraphic correlation techniques. (2) Except for the lowermost Paleozoic, nonmarine rocks are also present throughout the section again with characteristic fossil forms changing from top to bottom. (3) The sedimentary and fossil characteristics of the Cenozoic continental strata of the Rocky Mountain region suggest predominately local source areas for both sediment and fossil remains. However, these local source areas do not appear to be enduring antediluvial highlands reached by Flood waters during the latter stages of the Flood. As already mentioned, these local source areas were being covered with marine strata until shortly before the Rocky Mountain uplift — a very unlikely refuge area for antediluvial land animals and plants. (4) The fossiliferous strata in this large area covering most of the U.S. do not appear to be zoned ecologically but taxonomically. In other words, similar ecologies are found throughout the section but the characteristic fossil forms change from top to bottom — i.e., (1) and (2) above. (5) The distribution of these fossiliferous strata seems to show successive life communities inhabiting the same general area in temporal succession — i.e., (3) above.

Returning to our original two questions, the reader should note that the above observations accord with the predictions of the standard geological model rather than ecological zonation theory. This poor fit of

theory with some obvious and general features of the sedimentary record suggests that “ecological zonation” may be a poor starting point for developing a more detailed geological Flood model.

**I**n summary, the Biblical concept of special creation of life can be defended, with no apology, from scientific data. However, as presently conceived, critical historical predictions or consequences of a literal creationist model do not accord with the more obvious and general features of the physical geology of our planet. In other words, we have no viable “Flood model” or apparently even beginnings of a model after many years of effort by a number of creationists.

As a result, the task of trying to harmonize Genesis and geology may be akin to generating scientific models and attempting to demonstrate the scientific plausibility of Joshua’s long day or the virgin birth. Most of us realize that such attempts are theologically worthless and scientifically futile since these events are commonly conceded to fall in that ill-defined category of “miraculous,” not of the ordinary course of nature. Furthermore, we have precious little, if any, concrete evidence or physical artifacts remaining from these events that could verify or refute our proposed models.

It is commonly conceded in conservative Christian circles that the Noachian Flood must also have been an event of a miraculous nature. Perhaps it is the abundant wealth of potential physical artifacts (the whole surface of the earth) that tempts us to believe we can understand and rationally investigate the inner workings of a miracle. Our demonstrable successes in the area of special creation mainly involve evidence related to the inherent nature of the creation rather than detailed historical events. It is exactly these types of relationships that are likely to be discernible through the veil of the extraordinary occurrence, whereas detailed causal relationships are hopelessly obscured. Romans 1:20 says that it is the “invisible nature of God, namely, His eternal power and deity” that is clearly perceived in the creation, not the de-

tailed record of His historical interaction with it. The latter is the subject matter of His special revelation in the Bible.

Science provides us with a mystery concerning the origin of life forms. As Christians, we perceive this as an expression of God's creative acts and fill in the gaps, so to speak, with creative events. The secular evolutionist, lacking such an alternative, fills in the gaps with his evolutionary theory. Science also provides a seemingly airtight causal description of the earth's history that finds no evidence for universal floods, long days or virgin births. Should we adopt a similar perspective on all three of these miracles or should we feel that the universal flood is somehow more amenable to scientific analysis?

For completeness, I must raise another question. Do we correctly understand the Bible's message concerning the earth's history? This is not a popular question, but if we fail to ask it, we can be justly accused of believing that we have the final word on Biblical interpretation. In fact, if we honestly insist that the Biblical record of earth's physical history be demonstrated to be in plausible accord with the "facts of science," a reanalysis of our Biblical interpretations is probably inevitable, for the literal creationist model presently leads to an inconsistent stance towards the "facts of science" and I see no indications that this situation will improve in the near future.

There are two important considerations that should shape an evangelical or theological stance toward creation research: (1) the

position should be consistent with the Biblical revelation; (2) it should not unduly hamper responsible research efforts to solve problems that arise as a result of creation research. These considerations suggest that we should emphasize those positive points — evidences for creation of life, design in nature, etc. — without tying them to a defense of Flood geology, a defense that is presently inconsistent in its use of scientific data. This inconsistency is evident to knowledgeable persons and can only detract from the value of our positive contributions. We can emphasize the miraculous nature of the Biblical Flood and our reservation at being able to demonstrate its congruence with scientific facts. At the same time, we recognize that this position is not ideal and we are exploring various alternatives. Too often, we feel obliged to evangelize a particular accommodation of scientific evidence with the Biblical account. When it becomes necessary to revise or discard these accommodations, much confusion arises and various people appear to be working at cross-purposes. If, instead, we maintain a more consistently defensible interim position, then we can leave the field of possible accommodations relatively unrestricted as it should be.

Well-intentioned persons have been asking creationist geologists for scientific models that support literal creationism. Scientists should not mislead them by concealing the great problems that presently confront such an effort. I hope that they realize that the scientist's task may prove impossible due to the inherent nature of the problem.

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# Geologic Time: The Scientific Evidence and the Genesis Record

by P. E. Hare

**T**he crucial battle in the present war between science and scripture seems to be centered on the question of time. How much time is represented by the stratigraphic succession of rocks in the earth's crust? Do the ages of fossil-bearing rocks extend back to 600 million years (Cambrian), or even farther back into the Precambrian as suggested by radioactive age dates? Or are most of the fossil-bearing rocks the products of a recent catastrophe as advocated by "flood geologists"? This seems like a straightforward question that could be approached from a number of scientific disciplines. But it is obviously much more than a scientific question. Many scholars, including a number who have been trained in science, believe that the earth is only about 6,000 years old. Their belief is based not so much on scientific evidence as it is on an interpretation of "divinely inspired statements" that limits the earth's age to thousands of years. The obvious danger in this approach is to assume our interpretation of scriptural data as infallible, as did most Christians in the

controversies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Equating inspiration and infallibility is a deadly error and is a trap that must be avoided as we seek to harmonize the works and words of God.

For those who believe that "true science is but an interpretation of the handwriting of God in the material world,"<sup>1</sup> that nature and revelation shed light on each other,<sup>2</sup> and that "a correct understanding of both will prove them to be in harmony,"<sup>3</sup> it is a serious matter to disregard either scientific or scriptural data. The committed Christian takes *both* scripture *and* science seriously, since he believes God to be the author of both. When problems of harmonizing occur, the natural impulse is to choose sides and dismiss the opposing side as in error or irrelevant. Most fundamentalist Christians — including many of the Seventh-day Adventist scientific community — reject the scientific evidence for an old earth, feeling that an old earth is not compatible with scripture. They stand in opposition to the group (most of the non-Christians in scientific disciplines) who reject the relevancy of scripture and feel only the scientific evidence can be trusted.

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Some Christians compromise by separating the inorganic earth from the fossils and accepting the scientific evidence for the age of

the inorganic materials. They suggest that the present crust of the earth was formed at "the time of the flood" by reworking the old inorganic rocks and incorporating fossils from various ecological zones into various layers. Reworking the older rocks, they argue, has resulted in a series of apparent ages, as the radioactive clocks were contaminated or only partially reset.

Still others, attempting to find harmony between scripture and science, consider both sources to be essentially correct as a starting point at harmonization. Let them both speak for themselves, they argue. If the interpretation of the evidence for an old earth is correct, there must be a problem, not with scripture but in our interpretation of scripture. It should be possible to harmonize most, if not all, of the existing problems between science and scripture by allowing each source to shed light on the other. This approach is not the easy way out. An individual may find it a real struggle to modify concepts, scientific or scriptural, he has held for many years. It is not easy to evaluate data, especially if they are not in one's area of training. To determine what the data of science may really say as opposed to someone's interpretation of the data is just as important as approaching scripture and deciding what God is saying through the inspired human agencies. The prophets of God were inspired, but not infallible, as the story of the disobedient prophet in 1 Kings 13 so dramatically records.

Clearly, many scriptural passages must be interpreted in the context of the time in which they were written. When Joshua commanded the sun, "Stand thou still" (Joshua 10:12), he was speaking in the framework of his scientific concepts, not twentieth-century concepts. There was no thought of settling a future scientific debate between the followers of Copernicus and the followers of Ptolemy. The reformer Martin Luther used Joshua's statement to "prove" that the Bible taught the earth was fixed and it was the sun that moved around the earth!<sup>4</sup> The astronomical evidence is so obvious to the trained mind of the twentieth century (common-sense observations still suggest the sun moves around the earth) that we

interpret Joshua's statement in its historical context to achieve a harmony between scripture and science.

Many feel that this method of harmonization is not valid for geological data on the age of the earth and the age of fossil-bearing rocks. It is felt that if much more than 6,000 years is allowed for the age of the earth this will prove evolution to be true. Actually, the probability for the spontaneous generation of a living cell is still infinitely small even if 4.5 billion years were allowed instead of 6,000.<sup>5</sup> The evolutionist who rejects God and the supernatural must believe in spontaneous generation in one form or another. Pasteur in the nineteenth century presumably discredited this theory and put it to rest; but in recent decades the theory has rebounded and is again a respectable scientific concept to many scientists.<sup>6</sup> To believe in the origin of living organisms from the spontaneous chance organization of inorganic matter requires a faith not unlike that required of the Christian to believe "In the beginning, God created. . . ." Science may never be able to provide data to answer the great questions of origin. How and when was the universe created? How and when was life created? Faith apparently will always be necessary whether in science or in scriptural understanding.

To many scientists, the evidence for an age of billions of years for the earth is convincing. Consider a brief geological case study of Crater Lake in Oregon. A spectacular series of volcanic explosions of ash, pumice and other volcanic debris, followed by the collapse of the top of an ancestral peak into a craterlike depression (called a caldera) formed what we now know as Crater Lake. By piecing evidence together from a number of geographical areas and different disciplines, scientists have reconstructed the past events in detail and have suggested that Mount Mazama lost its top about 6,500 years ago at a time when the wind was blowing from the southwest and glaciers still covered much of the upper reaches of Mount Mazama.

Geological evidences of past events are much like the clues found at the scene of a crime. Each clue needs to be evaluated and

interpreted within a time sequence. Most geological evidence involves the sequence or succession of past events. An obvious but important concept is that in a series of superimposed, undisturbed sedimentary layers the lower layers are older than the upper layers. Another is that volcanic ash from a volcanic explosion can be carried hundreds of miles from its source and be deposited in the ocean, lakes, peat bogs or permanent ice sheets nearly simultaneously, forming a marker ash bed that can be used for correlating events prior to and subsequent to the volcanic explosion. "Tephrochronology" is the term applied to geologic age-dating and correlation by means of volcanic ash. (Tephra is the general term for ejected volcanic material.)

Consider some of the geologic evidence for the history of Crater Lake. The casual visitor to Crater Lake is impressed by its deep blue color, size (approximately five miles in diameter) and depth (about 2,000 feet). The steepness of the rim around the shore indicates an unusual setting for a lake, since no rivers can be seen entering or leaving the lake. The rugged, uneven surface of the rim is an important clue to the possible ancestral mountain. Glacial evidence in the form of U-shaped notches in the rim, polished bedrock and moraines at the foot of the U-shaped valleys suggest extensive glaciation in the past. The U-shaped notches in the rim resulted when the upper part of the peak with its glaciers and upper parts of the U-shaped valleys collapsed into the caldera, leaving only the lower part of the glacial valleys intact. The obvious conclusion is that in order to support such extensive glaciers there was a high elevation source for snow and ice accumulation; hence, the reconstruction of Mount Mazama to 12,000 feet elevation or more.

The direction of the wind when Mount Mazama exploded is known, of course, from the distribution of airborne pumice and ash. Deposits of tephra extend toward the northeast and diminish in particle size and thickness with distance from Crater Lake. Ash from the explosion blanketed thousands of square miles and has been incorporated into the sedimentary record of peat bogs and lakes

throughout the northwest.<sup>7</sup> The layers of Mount Mazama ash provide useful horizon markers for relating other sedimentary structures such as pollen profiles. Recognition and identification of ash layers are aided by chemical and petrologic analysis of the particles. Different volcanic sources — and successive ashes from the same source — have distinctive chemical "fingerprints." Fission track dating of glass "shards" in the ash is also useful in correlation and identification of ash layers.

When Mount Mazama exploded, the tephra, of course, was hot. The finer ash particles remained airborne and eventually cooled; but the larger ash and pumice fragments fell to the ground in an incandescent avalanche. The fiery cloud charred and buried not only trees growing around Mount Mazama but some up to 35 miles away! Some of these charred trees were discovered during the construction of a road cut and sent to a radiocarbon laboratory for C-14 dating. The analyses of several specimens in different laboratories yielded radiocarbon dates of about 6,500 ± 200 years B.P. (before present) as the time when these trees were killed and buried and Crater Lake was born.<sup>8</sup>

Regardless of whether or not a date of about 6,500 years ago is accepted as a reasonably accurate estimate of the time since Mount Mazama exploded, it must be realized that this event is just one of the most recent geological events that has occurred in the area. Before the explosion, a mountain existed that was high enough to sustain major glacial activity for some period of time. Three episodes of glaciation are recognized with glacial debris alternating with volcanic rocks.<sup>9</sup> Evidence also suggests ice thickness to 1,000 feet and glaciers ten or more miles in length. The building of Mount Mazama to an elevation of 12,000 feet or more (8,000 feet above the surrounding plateau) did not occur overnight but apparently built up over a period of time by intermittent activity with ejection of ash, pumice and other debris alternating with outpourings of lava. The postmortem anatomical record of these episodes in the building of



Mount Mazama can be clearly seen today in the steeply dipping layers of rock forming the rim around Crater Lake.

The most interesting information relating the demise of Mount Mazama with other geological events comes from the layer of ash that blanketed much of Oregon, Washington and Idaho as well as parts of Montana, British Columbia and Alberta. This time-stratigraphic marker is found preserved in numerous lake sediment cores and peat bog

**“Preservation of delicate plant structures is so nearly perfect that it seems unlikely that fossil remains were transported any great distance.”**

sections throughout the Northwest. In some deposits, other volcanic ash layers are found in addition to the Mazama ash layer.<sup>10</sup>

Ash falls older than Mazama ash are abundant and widespread. One particularly widespread ash deposit originated from Glacier Peak and when found in the same lake sediment core or peat bog section is found considerably below the Mazama ash, indicating an earlier date for the Glacier Peak ash. Stratigraphic estimates based on average sediment accumulation rates suggest Glacier Peak ash to be roughly twice as old as the Mazama ash.<sup>10</sup> Radiocarbon dates confirm this estimate and indicate that the Glacier Peak ash is about 12,000 years old.<sup>7</sup>

As spectacular and awesome as active volcanoes are, they do not represent the ultimate in volcanic activity. The most extensive volcanic areas often do not even have true volcanic mountains. Fantastic amounts of very fluid lava have poured out through great fissures and spread out over the earth's surface for thousands of square miles. Known to geologists as plateau or flood basalts, individual lava flows commonly range from 21 to 100 feet in thickness and may exceed 5,000 feet of total accumulation.

Over 200,000 square miles of the states of Oregon, Washington and Idaho are covered

by plateau basalts, the Columbia River Basalt Group as they are referred to in the scientific literature.

The Columbia and Snake Rivers have cut spectacular channels and canyons into the Columbia River basalts, exposing in the canyon walls the history of successive outpourings of lava. Frequently, individual flows show evidences of weathering and erosion, indicating again the lapse of time and the intermittent nature of volcanic activity. Fossil evidence preserved in soil zones between lava flows suggests that a wide variety of plants and animals existed locally during the quiet periods between the outpourings of molten rock. Molds of upright trees several feet in diameter appear to be in position of growth with even the impressions of the tree bark preserved in the lava molds. In at least one case, the bloated body of a rhinoceros left an almost perfect lava mold!<sup>11</sup>

The enormous volume of lavas that makes up the plateau basalts of the Columbia River Basalt Group *is considerably older* than Mazama or Glacier Peak ash. In places, nearly 2,000 feet of younger sediments (Mascall and Rattlesnake formations) overlie the Columbia River Basalt Group, and lake and peat bog sediments containing Mazama and Glacier Peak ash layers, in turn, overlie the eroded (glacially eroded in some places) surfaces of those formations.<sup>12</sup>

Below (and therefore older than) the extensive lavas of the Columbia River Basalt Group are the John Day and Clarno formations, which contain some of the richest vertebrate and plant fossil beds in the Northwest. Volcanic explosive material makes up a large part of the thousands of vertical feet of strata represented. The flora and fauna represented by fossils show a far different panorama of life than is found anywhere near the area today. Fossil evidence points toward a mild temperate and wet environment in contrast to the semiarid, continental-type climate prevailing today. Preservation of delicate plant structures is so nearly perfect that it seems unlikely that fossil remains were transported any great distance.

Still older rocks of Mesozoic and Paleozoic age are found stratigraphically below the Clarno formation.<sup>12</sup> Some of the formations



are similar to rock types and fossil assemblages found in the cliffs of the Grand Canyon far to the south and east. All of these stratigraphic units can be arranged in order from youngest to oldest based strictly on the principle that in a series of superimposed sedimentary beds the top layer is the youngest and the bottom layer is the oldest. Nowhere, of course, do you find all the units intact at any one locality. Erosion has removed some units from some places and re-deposited them as younger rock layers. Nevertheless, by careful mapping of various units and making use of drill core data, it is possible to arrange the sequence of geologic events (erosion and deposition) that has produced the geologic column. This has been the principal work of geologists over the last century and has made possible the production of geologic maps and the correlation of stratigraphic units over widely separated areas.

**I**f geologic science is on the right track and the geologic column does represent a sequence of events over the vast span of time, how can the scriptural record be harmonized with this evidence? Let's explore some possible approaches.<sup>13</sup> The scriptures are concerned primarily with the creation of man and the subsequent history of civilization. In the geologic record, human fossils are found only in the uppermost stratigraphic layers, the Pleistocene. This would seem to indicate that the geologic record of pre-Pleistocene rocks took place before the time recorded in scripture, concerning which scripture is silent.

What about the flood? Where does it fit into the geologic record? The scriptural account suggests that man had populated a sizable geographical area of the earth. If we use the principle of letting each record shed light on the other, we would look for geological evidences of the flood within the Pleistocene. There would seem to be several possibilities, including the worldwide catastrophic rise in sea level during the melting of the continental ice accumulations. It follows that if this approach is correct, then most of the sedimentary rocks of the geologic column are not the

result of the flood. Along with most scientists of the eighteenth century, George McCready Price in his flood model assigned virtually all the stratified rocks to the flood. The question of time is crucial. How much time is represented by the sequence of rocks in the geologic column? Age-dating methods suggest billions of years. Flood geologists believe most of the sedimentary rocks were formed by the flood in a short span of time. If flood geology is on the right track, then it should be possible to show that the various age-dating methods are totally in error. This seems unlikely in view of the fact that estimates based on realistic sedimentation rates of carbonate rocks — as well as other sediment types — are in general agreement with results from other age-dating techniques.

It is interesting to note that the same age-dating tools (radiocarbon) and stratigraphic principles used in geology are frequently used in archeology to date material and to determine the relative succession of occupational levels to substantiate Bible history. The Dead Sea Scrolls have a radiocarbon date of about 2,000 years and show that the much later manuscripts upon which our present

**“If geologic science is on the right track . . . , how can the scriptural record be harmonized with this evidence?”**

Bible translations are based have changed very little from these manuscripts dating to 100 B.C. Radiocarbon dating was used to show these manuscripts were not just recent fakes. A quotation from *Time* shows an example of what happens when scientific methods are applied to Biblical archaeological problems:

Christians revere the Bible as a treasury of divine revelation; skeptics regard it as an unreliable collection of fable and folklore. Over the past century a host of scientists — archaeologists, geologists, astronomers, botanists — have added a third perspective. Beneath the barren plains and foothills of the ancient Biblical country, they

have made discoveries revealing that whatever else it may be the Bible is a remarkably faithful chronicle of history.<sup>14</sup>

Again, why is it so many of us use scientific evidence when it supports our opinions but denounce the evidence obtained by identical methods when it conflicts with our concepts? If we really believed that nature and revelation shed light on each other, we would be more careful in our evaluation of data from both scientific and scriptural sources.

Should the committed Christian even be concerned about harmonizing scripture and science? Perhaps God intends this science-scripture conflict as a test of loyalty! Is it necessary as a sign of loyalty to deny one's own physical senses? Some use the quotation, "Are the people of God so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses?"<sup>15</sup> When read in context, this quotation deals with the miracle-working power of Satan used to impersonate Christ, "to deceive if it were possible the very elect." We are not expected to deny our senses when our senses tell us that real miracles are being performed, but rather we are expected to see through the deception of Satan and not credit the miracles to Christ!

The history of science and the Seventh-day Adventist church shows that the church has allowed a number of various ideas on geology to be published in the official church publications. From a literal interpretive point of view in which the entire universe — or at least the solar system — was created 6,000 years ago in six literal days, the possibility has been suggested that there may have been an initial creation of the earth's inorganic matter long before the creation week of Genesis.<sup>16</sup> This would allow the light from stars millions of light years away to reach the earth instead of having intact light paths created along with the stars 6,000 years ago. It would also allow for the cooling of the tremendous quantities of plutonic igneous rocks (mainly granites) that make up the cores of the continents. Radioactive age-dating clocks could be operating during this interim between creations, and the ages now determined would reflect this primordial state of an earth "without form and void."

For a number of years, the author has been involved in the development of a chemical method of dating fossils that uses the breakdown of proteins and changes in the amino acids from protein in bones, shells and teeth to estimate the ages of certain fossils as well as the effective temperatures at which the fossils have been subjected to since deposition.<sup>17</sup> Chemical changes, unlike nuclear reactions, are affected by temperatures. Higher temperatures speed up the rate of reaction, while lower temperatures slow down the rate. With a single chemical reaction, it would not be possible to determine both the temperature and time of the reaction. One of the two variables would have to be known or estimated. Usually, the temperature can be estimated by reference to present and inferred past climatic changes. It is often possible to simultaneously determine the age of a fossil and the effective temperature the fossil has experienced by using several different chemical reactions. The results on several fossil samples that have been dated by the amino acid technique tend to confirm the general validity of radiocarbon dating as well as other radioactive methods. The amino acid method is subject to a number of potential problems such as contamination, possible local high-heat source (such as a nearby lava flow), leaching by ground water, possible microbiological decomposition and perhaps many others. Some of these potential problems are easily recognized, others are more subtle. The use of different materials like teeth, bone and shell from the same stratigraphic horizon helps to reveal those systems that may not be suitable.

In every method of age-dating there are problems with discordant data and interpretation. Frequently, in apologetic literature, the problems and discrepancies are emphasized and the entire scientific discipline of geochronology is ridiculed. It is somewhat reminiscent of the arguments used against a rotating spherical earth in the scientific controversies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (e.g., a rotating earth would fling objects out into space and create a continual violent wind). Because progress in science is often accomplished by trial and error, it is not

surprising that new concepts initiate controversy. In fact, controversy plays an important part in the scientific method, because it usually leads to further investigation and data that relate to the concept. A valid scientific concept survives the test of time, rarely, however, without some modification. Because of the tentative nature of scientific advances, scientists are generally reluctant to pronounce a scientific concept to be in its final form, realizing that new discoveries often lead to modification of existing concepts. Nevertheless, after a period of controversy and more data gathering, a surviving concept is considered to be on the right track and is useful for generating further scientific advances.

In the eighteenth century and the early part

**“The scriptural data might be interpreted in other ways to harmonize with the scientific data currently available as well as with future scientific discoveries.”**

of the nineteenth century, the concept of the flood as the prime geologic agent and the concept of the age of the earth as 6,000 years were serious scientific concepts. Neither concept stood the test of time required of scientific concepts. Were they abandoned prematurely? If so, by the very process of the scientific method, new data will eventually emerge to challenge the present concepts, or an outright scientific revolution will take place to completely replace the present theories.

Serious attempts have been made by Adventist scientists of the Geoscience Research Institute to reinterpret the data in terms of flood geology models, but little or no progress has yet been made on the real crux of the whole geologic column: time. It should be possible to show that the fossils in different stratigraphic layers are at least approximately the same age and thus lend credibility to a

flood model, or it should be possible to show that the fossils in the geologic column are of substantially different ages and hence lend credibility to the concept that the geologic column does, in fact, represent an appreciable sequence in time as well as space. Time is the important element and must be considered.

Unfortunately, prospects do not seem bright for a resolution of the difficult situation. The formulation by the church of a “creation statement” seems to be a first step in an attempt to control the beliefs of certain church members.<sup>18</sup> Some administrators understandably want to maintain the concepts of flood geology and a short chronology. Allowing broad viewpoints, especially among denominational teachers who will influence students, is considered akin to fostering apostasy. Little or no consideration seems to be given to the possibility that the scriptural data might be interpreted in other ways to harmonize with the scientific data currently available as well as with future scientific discoveries. As long as this position is maintained, there seems no way that the two sets of data can “shed light on each other.”

The geologic record indicates climatic conditions and various kinds of animals and plants existed in the past history of the earth that were far different from what exists on the earth today. Many sincere, committed Christians maintain that “the time when these conditions existed can be learned only from the Inspired Record.”<sup>19</sup> Does this mean we are to dismiss as irrelevant the methods used in determining the ages of rocks and fossils such as radiocarbon dating and potassium-argon, etc.? Virtually all the scientific methods currently used to date the past have been developed within the last 25–30 years. Obviously, we must be cautious in accepting premature, tentative scientific data. However, when several methods have been developed and applied and the results are generally consistent, can we still dismiss the data as premature? An individual must decide for himself if the data and interpretation are reliable and if so how they shed light

on statements from inspired authors that seem to be in conflict. Were these statements "present truth" in the historical context of the time when they were written, or were they statements of absolute truth for all time? We cannot rely on others to make up our own minds any more than we can depend on others for our own salvation.

Whether future discoveries will disprove the current concepts of geology or disprove the current concepts of flood geologists remains to be seen. Regardless of what future

scientific discoveries reveal, it is essential that we seriously consider the possibility that as far as the concept of time is concerned, the present geologic estimate of billions of years for the age of the earth may be essentially correct and also that fossil-bearing sedimentary rocks are substantially older than 6,000 years. How would such "truth" shed light on the written word? There will not be any significant effort at harmonizing science and the written word until we take *both* sources seriously.

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# Divorce, Remarriage and Church Discipline

by Marvin Moore

**I**n matters of divorce and remarriage, and particularly remarriage, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has followed the lead of other conservative bodies and placed the entire responsibility on the church to determine what are the grounds for divorce and remarriage, and when they have been met. An entire chapter in the *Church Manual* outlines the policy in great detail. The member who disagrees with the church's interpretation of the Bible or of the facts in his case cannot act on his personal convictions without risking at least the threat of discipline.

One of the chief problems that confronts those who formulate church policy is where to draw the line between the individual member's responsibility to interpret the Bible for himself in matters of conduct, and the responsibility of the church as a body to establish standards of conduct. Nowhere has this been more difficult for Seventh-day Adventists than in matters of divorce and remarriage.

Historically, the church has attempted to

enforce the New Testament instruction on divorce and remarriage to the letter. This is in harmony with Biblical principles of discipline. Many church members, particularly those from a conservative background, believe that this is the only policy on divorce and remarriage that the church could devise that would be in harmony with the Bible. However, as in other matters, the church would be in harmony with the Bible if it were to place greater responsibility on its members. In not doing so, the church overlooks two problems: its historic policy creates a serious ethical problem of its own and fails to consider a variety of interpretations of the inspired evidence on divorce and remarriage.

First, because the church takes to itself the full responsibility for determining what constitutes Biblical grounds and when the conditions have been met, church leaders must require definite proof of unfaithfulness before the innocent party can be cleared for remarriage. And because conservative members tend to keep a watchful eye on lowering of the standards, leaders must be prepared to publicly defend their approval for remarriage. The result is that sins of the most personal nature, that ought to be kept in the smallest possible circle, are spread before the entire church.

Pastors and church administrators may

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wish they could keep secret what they know, and most probably try. But when accused of lowering the standard, in order to protect themselves they must at least say, "This marriage is in harmony with church policy." The implications of this statement are obvious. Inevitably, a shadow is cast on the reputation of the offending party. His sin becomes a matter of public record even if the details do not.

The innocent party is required to accuse another Christian of wrongdoing in order to justify his own right doing. He must damage someone else's reputation to protect his own, and this is not right. Some have hired private detectives to spy on their former mates in order to obtain the absolute proof that the church requires. Such acts are ethically questionable, but the alternative to the church member is discipline or a life of celibacy.

Second, the historic church policy is based on a particular interpretation of the inspired evidence regarding divorce and remarriage. However, sincere Christians do interpret the inspired evidence differently. Some believe those who remarry on grounds other than adultery are living in sin. Others disagree. Some believe I Corinthians 7:15 ("but if the unbelieving depart, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases") grants desertion as grounds for remarriage. Others disagree. Some believe that "violation of the marriage bed" includes the refusal of conjugal rights.<sup>1</sup> Others believe it means only an extramarital affair. Differences exist on other points as well.

The 1976 Annual Council action on divorce and remarriage recognizes that the decision whether to divorce must be left with the individual: "The decision whether to divorce must, in any case, be the individual's personal responsibility and not be that of a third party. . . . When alienation has advanced too far for reconciliation, separation by mutual consent or by legal enactment may be necessary, or the partners may decide on divorce."<sup>2</sup> There is no condemnation implied, or threat of discipline, against those who feel compelled to make this difficult decision.

I believe it would be consistent with the Bible evidence on discipline for the church to

recognize that the decision whether to remarry is also at least somewhat a personal one "and not that of a third party." I suggest three points for implementing this recognition.

First the church should state officially, either in the *Church Manual* or in an Annual Council policy action, that while the church holds to a particular view, it recognizes the right of its members to hold other scriptural interpretations and to act on them in the context of proper counsel.

Second, the conference committees on divorce and remarriage, as established by the Annual Council, could consider the requests for remarriage presented by those whose proposed remarriages are in question. If reasonably based on inspired evidence, the convictions of church members could be respected even though they differed from the official view. In such circumstances, prayerful counseling could be as much a function of the committee as decision making.

Third, the church should not attempt to control its members' lives forever. If a member errs to the extent that the church cannot see its way clear to approve his remarriage, how long shall the church dictate the terms to such an individual? If he follows counsel and remains loyal to the church, shall it still tell him 50 years later, because of his actions half a century before, that he will be disfellowshipped if he remarries in his old age? How about 25 years later? Or five years later?

Regardless of how bad a situation may be, a time comes when the church's obligation to maintain its standards and its reputation has run its course, and the individual's right to live his life before God as he sees best should be restored. Some object to a time period after which remarriage is allowed. They argue that what is sin today is sin five or 50 years later. This argument is true, but it is not the point. The point is that there comes a time when the individual should have the freedom to make his own decisions and to act on his convictions with God, not the church, as his judge.

Interestingly, a recent issue of *Liberty* car-

ried an article on abortion with an editor's introduction, a portion of which read, "Whether abortion is right or wrong is not a question *Liberty* seeks to answer. Its editors have opinions, as does the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which take a 'respect for life' position, but leave the implementation of that ambiguity to the Scripture-enlightened conscience of its members."<sup>3</sup> If we were to poll the leadership of our General Conference and North American union conferences on the question of abortion, I suspect we would find that a majority hold the view that abortion is a violation of the sixth commandment except under unusual circumstances. Yet, the church leaves the implementation of this important matter to the Scripture-enlightened consciences of its members. The church makes no effort to prescribe behavior in this area or to discipline those whose practice differs from the generally accepted view. It seems reasonable for the church to follow a similar policy regarding remarriage.

Some may object that this proposal would lower the church's standards. I see no reason why we need to state a lower standard. The doctrine of discipline is the issue here, not the doctrine of marriage. We can keep the same standard. Yet, the responsibility for determining how to reach the standard should be shifted partly to the individual; it should not be entirely a church decision as to what are the Bible conditions for remarriage and when they have been met.

Some may fear that adopting such a proposal would create a rush on the divorce

courts. I doubt it. Most people are not looking for an excuse to break up their homes, and those who are often behave so irresponsibly that they would be subject to church discipline, anyway. Even now, those who choose to remarry without the traditional Bible grounds generally can do so without loss of membership if they choose the "right" pastor and the "right" local church. Unfortunately, this present inconsistency undermines church authority.

The church should uphold a high marriage standard. Divorce and remarriage have far-reaching social consequences, and they cannot be treated the same way we treat differences of opinion on tithe paying or Sabbathkeeping. The church must discipline under certain circumstances, and policies must be formulated that provide for these circumstances. However, marriage is also very personal, and nobody can truly understand or decide everything about another person's personal problems and how he relates to Bible principles. Therefore, the church needs to provide a greater balance between its responsibility and that of its members to interpret what the Bible means in domestic matters.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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# THE BIBLE CONFERENCE OF 1919

## Introduction

by Molleurus Couperus

Nearly all Protestant churches have had at least one outstanding leader whose dedication to what he considered his divinely ordained work and message was apparent to all. In spite of the fact that these men made mistakes and erred, their grateful and admiring followers awarded them a place of unusual authority in their church, particularly in matters of Biblical interpretation and doctrine. This was especially true of Luther and Calvin. Martin Luther, for instance, was called "an instrument of God," "a prophet of the Almighty" and an "apostle of freedom." Luther also applied the title of prophet to himself occasionally. His prophecies were

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gathered together by Johannes Lapäus and published by him in 1578 under the title *True Prophecies of the Dear Prophet and Holy Man of God Dr. Martini Luther*. This book was republished in 1846. Hans Preuss in 1933 wrote a scholarly volume entitled *Martin Luther the Prophet*, in which he lists the prominent theologians who called Luther a prophet, both before and after the Enlightenment. During the last century, Luther was more often called apostle or reformer. As time went on after Luther's death and scholars were able to study and compare the astounding size of Luther's writings (his published works fill more than 60 volumes), a critical evaluation was possible of the nature and extent of his contribution to the Christian church. In all this, he has remained the Reformer, the great Man of God.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has



been blessed by the great devotion and leadership of many individuals, both during its early history and its later development. Among these none has had a greater influence on this church than Ellen G. White, from shortly after the Disappointment of 1844 until the present, long after her death on July 16, 1915.

In spite of her limited formal education, Ellen (Harmon) White developed into a person of profound insight and spiritual stature, a wise counselor and leader, a deep Bible student and commentator. All of these characteristics are reflected in the voluminous written material that came from her pen, which has continued to extend her influence and authority in her church until the present.

**“Some in the church claimed verbal inspiration for the writings of Ellen White, a position rejected by James White and officially by the church. Others claimed infallibility and many called her a prophet. Both of these she denied . . . .”**

As early as December 1844, when she was only 17 years of age, she had a vision in which she saw the Advent people on their journey to the Holy City. This was the first of many visions, dreams and messages which she communicated to the church, nearly all of which were related to the beliefs, work and organization of her church, while others were for counsel to individual members. As Ellen White matured, she saw herself increasingly active in preaching, and traveled widely, including to Australia and Europe, to aid in the development of her church. She also became more involved in writing articles for various church periodicals and in publishing large books, even sets of books such as the five-volume *Conflict of the Ages* series. To aid her in this demanding part of her work, she was able to secure the help of a number of very capable literary assistants and secretaries, one of whom, Marian Davis, worked with her for some 25 years.

Soon after her visions first appeared and were publicized, questions naturally arose concerning the nature of these visions, their authority, and a little later, their relationship to the Bible. This latter question has remained a subject for discussion and even controversy in the church ever since. Ellen's husband, James, became fully aware of this problem soon after her first visions, and discussed it at some length as early as April 21, 1851, in the *Review and Herald*. He stated:

Every Christian is, therefore, in duty bound to take the Bible as a perfect rule of faith and duty. He should pray fervently to be aided by the Holy Spirit in searching the Scriptures for the whole truth, and for his whole duty. He is not at liberty to turn from them to learn his duty through any of the gifts. We say that the very moment he does, he places the gifts in a wrong place, and takes an extremely dangerous position. The Word should be in front, and the eye of the church should be placed upon it, as the rule to walk by, and the fountain of wisdom, from which to learn duty in “all good works.” But if a portion of the church err from the truths of the Bible, and become weak, and sickly, and the flock become scattered, so that it seems necessary for God to employ the gifts of the Spirit to correct, revive and heal the erring, we should let him work.

In a second article in the same issue, James White wrote: “God's Word is an everlasting rock. On that we can stand with confidence at all times. Though the Lord gives dreams, designed generally for the individuals who have them, to comfort, correct, or to instruct in extreme trials or dangers, yet to suppose that he designs to guide in general duties by dreams, is unscriptural, and very dangerous. The Word and Spirit are given to guide us.” Four years later, on Oct. 16, 1855, he wrote again in the *Review and Herald* on the same subject:

There is a class of persons who are determined to have it that the *Review* and its conductors make the view of Mrs. White a Test of doctrine and Christian fellowship. — What has the *Review* to do with Mrs. W.'s views? The sentiments published in its columns are all drawn from the Holy

Scriptures. No writer of the *Review* has ever referred to them as authority on any point. The *Review* for five years has not published one of them. Its motto has been, "The Bible and the Bible alone, the only rule of faith and duty."

As the years passed by, some in the church claimed verbal inspiration for the writings of Ellen White, a position rejected by James White and officially by the church. Others claimed infallibility, and many called her a prophet. Both of these she denied, but felt that her work was more than that of a prophet, calling herself a messenger. On infallibility, she stated: "In regard to infallibility, I never claimed it; God alone is infallible" (*Selected Messages I*: p. 37). In spite of these statements, from time to time some authors in the church have claimed various degrees of infallibility for her writings. Roderick Owen, in a reprint article in the *Review and Herald* of June 3, 1971, assigned *infallible interpretation of Scripture* to her. The official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has always been that our beliefs are solely based on Scripture, and that by Scripture all claims for religious truth must ultimately be tested. Believing that Ellen White was used by God to help guide the infant church as a spiritual leader does not imply that one can ascribe to her infallibility in her work, words or writings. Her son, W. C. White, who worked closely with his mother for many years, and for the Ellen G. White Estate after her death, wrote regarding her statements on history: "Mother has never claimed to be authority on history" (W. C. White, in *The Great Controversy*, 1911 Edition, p. 4; quoted by Arthur L. White in *The Ellen G. White Writings*, 1973). "Regarding Mother's writings and their use as an authority on points of history and chronology Mother has never wished our brethren to treat them as authority regarding details of history or historical dates. . . . When *Controversy* was written, Mother never thought that the readers would take it as authority on historical dates or use it to settle controversy regarding details of history, and she does not now feel that it should be used in that way" (Letter from W. C.

White to W. W. Eastman, Nov. 4, 1912; quoted in *The Ellen G. White Writings*, by Arthur L. White, p. 33, 34).

By what standards then should the writings of Ellen G. White be judged? First of all, according to her own words and those of James White: by Scripture. All other statements, historical, medical, scientific, like the statements of any other mortal, must be able to pass historical or scientific research — the test of truth, as I believe Ellen White would have it. Then her message, so greatly confined to her own church by the unwarranted attitude of those who advocated infallibility for her writings, would become acceptable also for devotional and Biblical study outside her own church, which has been accused for so many years of having "an addition to or above Scripture."

The struggle that has been present in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to come to an acceptable and honest decision about the place which the writings of Ellen White should have for our church and those in other churches is illustrated by the discussions which took place at the Bible Conference in Takoma Park, from July 1-21, 1919, and which was followed immediately by a three-weeks long meeting of the Bible and History Teachers Council. In the *Review and Herald* of Aug. 14, 1919, W. E. Howell lists 22 delegates from our colleges attending the Bible and History Teachers Council, and other evidence indicates that the total number attending the Bible Conference was over 50. The president of the General Conference at that time, Arthur G. Daniells, reported on the Bible Conference in the *Review and Herald* of Aug. 21, 1919, and informs us that the meeting was attended "by editors, Bible and history teachers from our colleges and seminaries, and members of the General Conference Committee." Among those present at the Bible Conference, besides A. G. Daniells, were G. B. Thompson, field secretary of the General Conference; F. M. Wilcox, editor of the *Review and Herald*; M. E. Kern, formerly president of the Foreign Mission Seminary (now Columbia Union College); W. W. Prescott, formerly editor of the *Review and Herald* and then a field secretary of the General Conference (who had a

major part in the revision of the book *The Great Controversy* in 1911); H. C. Lacey, religion teacher at the Foreign Mission Seminary; W. E. Howell, editor of the *Christian Educator*; W. G. Wirth, a religion teacher at Pacific Union College, and later at the College of Medical Evangelists; M. C. Wilcox, book editor for the Pacific Press; A. O. Tait, editor of the *Signs of the Times*; C. M. Sorenson, history teacher at Emmanuel Missionary College; C. S. Longacre, secretary of the Religious Liberty Association; W. H. Wakeham, Bible teacher at Emmanuel Missionary College; J. N. Anderson, Bible teacher at the Washington Foreign Mission Seminary; C. L. Taylor, head of the Bible Department, Canadian Junior College; L. L. Caviness, associate editor of the *Review and Herald*; and T. M. French, head of the school of theology at Emmanuel Missionary College.

In his report of the Bible Conference, Elder Daniells emphasized the importance of continued and deeper study of the Scriptures by our church. He stated, "The one great object of this conference is to unite in a definite, practical, spiritual study of the Word of God." He then quotes at length from Ellen G. White where she counsels the church to a diligent study of the Scriptures, and includes the following: "The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God's people, should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. There is reason to fear that they may not be clearly discriminating between truth and error. When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves, to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. V, pp. 706, 707).

Elder Daniells also reported the actions that were taken at the conference, and from

this we quote: "We therefore express our appreciation of the following definite features which have marked the sessions of this Bible Conference:

5. For the incentive to more earnest Bible Study which the conference has aroused. . . . We recognise, however, that there are still many mines of truth in the Holy Scriptures, and that these will yield their treasure to the earnest, prayerful, humble seeker after right. . . .

6. We believe that the blessings and benefits which result from Bible conferences such as we have enjoyed, should be perpetuated in the future. . . . We therefore earnestly request the General Conference Committee to arrange for another conference of this character in 1920. . . .

Such a conference, however, was not held.

The record of the 1919 Bible Conference was lost until December 1974, when Dr. F. Donald Yost found two packages wrapped in paper at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Takoma Park. The packages contained some 2,400 pages of typewritten material, transcribed from stenographic notes taken at the Conference. It seems a tragedy that this material was not made available to Adventist teachers and ministers after the Bible Conference, and that the message which the participants in that Conference wanted to share with the church membership never was transmitted.

Following, we present the transcribed record of the meetings of the Bible Conference of 1919 on July 30 and Aug. 1, which dealt especially with the Spirit of Prophecy. The discussions were open and frank, but reflect great sensitivity. There were other meetings in which this subject was discussed, but the meetings here reported were the longest and most comprehensive. In them, a number of individuals participated who had worked personally with Ellen White for many years. Because of their great historical significance, the transcripts are published complete and unedited, so that the participants of the two meetings may speak for themselves.

# The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy In Our Teaching of Bible and History

July 30, 1919

**W. E. Howell:** Our topic for this hour, as arranged in the program, is "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in our Teaching of Bible and History." Elder Daniells is here with us this morning to fulfill his promise to our teachers that he would give us a talk along this line, and I am sure the opportunity of considering this question further will be greatly appreciated.

**A. G. Daniells:** I have been a little uncertain in my own mind as to just what line it would be best to follow. There is so much in this that it can not be fully presented in one talk, and I would regret missing the mark and taking up that which would not be of most interest to you; and so I finally decided that I would prefer to have a round-table talk. I would prefer to have you question me and then I would try to answer such points as are of most interest to you. I may not be able to give another talk here, and you probably would not have the time, and so I would like to make this hour most profitable. I will present one or two points as briefly as I can to start with, and then I will just open the way for questions.

First of all I want to reiterate what I stated in the talk I gave some evenings ago on this subject, — that I do not want to say one word that will destroy confidence in this gift to this people. I do not want to create doubts. I do not want to in any way depreciate the value of the writings of the spirit of prophecy. I have no doubt in my own mind. I do not know whether every man can say that or not, but I can say it with all honesty. I have had perplexities through the forty years I have been in the ministry. I have found things

similar to that to which Peter referred in Paul's writings, — hard to be understood. You know Peter said that, and I have had personal testimonies come to me that I could not understand. That is a remarkable thing, isn't it, for a man to get such a message as that? But that is what nearly all doubters hark back to when they get away from us, — they got a testimony they could not understand and believe. I could not understand then, but time has helped me to understand; and I have concluded that we do not see from the Lord's standpoint, and we do not know as much as the Lord knows about ourselves and so when He reveals things to us that we do not understand, it is because He knows more about us and our tendency and dangers than we do, ourselves.

The first one I got that threw me into confusion charged me very strongly with sort of — well, I will put it in the worst form — a tendency to domineer over my brethren in administrative matters, not giving them the freedom of mind and thought that they were entitled to. I did not understand that. It did not seem so. I asked some of my good friends, and they said they never had felt it, and that threw me into worse trouble. Even some members of the Committee had never seen that. What was I to do? They were not the right men for me to get my information from. I soon found that there were some men who believed that the message was right. Inside of a year or so I found a very strong tendency, under a bit of nervousness and weariness, to do that very thing; so I got the message out and reread it prayerfully, and acknowledged it to the Lord, and I am trying all the time to guard against any domineering

spirit, for I think it is a most abominable thing for a man in office to begin to lord it over people who are not in office; but it is in human nature. You have heard the story of the Irishman who was promoted to the position of foreman of a section gang. The next morning he went out and said to one of the men:

"Timothy O'Brien, come here."

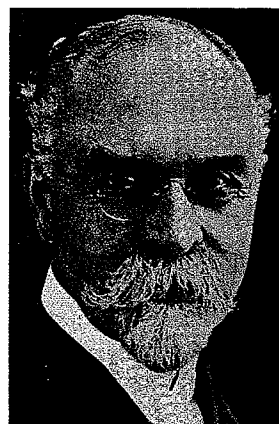
When the man came, he said to him: "I discharge ye this morning, not because I have anything agin ye, but to show me authority." [Laughter]

He had been put in office, and the very first thing he wanted to do was to show his authority. That is human nature, but it is not Christianity; and it is to be abominated and avoided by every one who gets office, whether president of the General Conference, or principal of a school, or head of a department in a school. All should avoid that and give every man his rights and freedom and liberty.

As I said, I have met things that were hard to be understood, but time has helped me to understand them, and I can honestly say this morning that I go along in this movement without any doubts in my mind. When I take positions differing from other men, that is not proof that I am a doubter. I may be a doubter of their views or their interpretation, but that does not make me a doubter of the spirit of prophecy. I may differ with a man about his interpretation of the Bible, but that does not make me a doubter of the Bible. But there are men who just hold me right up as a doubter of the Testimonies because I take the position that the Testimonies are not verbally inspired, and that they have been worked up by the secretaries and put in proper grammatical shape. A few years ago a man came onto the nominating committee and wanted me kept out of the presidency because I did not believe the Testimonies were verbally inspired. That was because I differed with him on theory and interpretation; but I am the one to say whether I doubt the Testimonies, am I not? [Voices: Yes, yes!] And so are you. I want to leave the impression that I am not trying in any way to put any doubts in your

mind. And O, I would feel terribly to have this denomination lose its true, genuine, proper faith in this gift that God gave to this church in these messages that have come to us. I want that we shall stay by this clear through to the end. [Amens]

Now with reference to the evidences: I differ with some of the brethren who have put together proofs or evidences of the



A. G. Daniells

genuineness of this gift, in this respect, — I believe that the strongest proof is found in the fruits of this gift to the church, not in physical and outward demonstrations. For instance, I have heard some ministers preach, and have seen it in writing, that Sister White once carried a heavy Bible — I believe they said it weighed forty pounds — on her outstretched hand, and looking up toward the heavens quoted texts and turned the leaves over and pointed to the texts, with her eyes toward the heavens. I do not know whether that was ever done or not. I am not sure. I did not see it, and I do not know that I ever talked with anybody that did see it. But, brethren, I do not count that sort of thing as a very great proof. I do not think that is the best kind of evidence. If I were a stranger in an audience, and heard a preacher enlarging on that, I would have my doubts. That is, I would want to know if he saw it. He would have to say, No, he never did. Then I would ask, "Did you ever see the man that did see it?" And he would have to answer, "No, I never did."

Well, just how much of that is genuine, and how much has crawled into the story? — I do not know. But I do not think that is the

kind of proof we want to use. It has been a long time since I have brought forward this sort of thing, — no breath in the body, and the eyes wide open. That may have accompanied the exercise of this gift in the early days, but it surely did not in the latter days, and yet I believe this gift was just as genuine and exercised just the same through these later years as in the early years.

**C. P. Bollman:** Isn't the same thing true of the Bible? Can't you size it up and believe it because of its fruit, what it does, and not because of the supernatural things related in it?

**A. G. Daniells:** Yes. For instance, I would not take the story of David killing a lion and a bear, or of Samson killing a lion, and herald that to unbelievers or strangers as proof that the Bible was inspired, especially about Samson. Here is the way I would want to teach the boys and girls: I would want to begin with the beginning of this movement. At that time here was a gift given to this person; and with that gift to that individual, at the same time, came this movement of the three-fold message. They came right together in the same year. That gift was exercised steadily and powerfully in the development of this movement. The two were inseparably connected, and there was instruction given regarding this movement in all its phases through this gift, clear through for seventy years.

Then, in my own mind, I look the phases over. We will take one on the Bible. What shall be the attitude of the people in this movement toward the Bible? We know that that should be our authority without a creed and without the higher criticism. This is *the Book*. The position we hold today is the right position, we believe, — to magnify this Book, to get our instruction from this Book, and to preach this Book. The whole plan of redemption, everything that is necessary to salvation, is in this Book, and we do not have to go to anything outside of the Book to be saved. That has been the attitude of the spirit of prophecy toward this book from the beginning, hasn't it? [Voices: Yes.] And I suppose we can give credit to that gift for our attitude toward the Book as much as to any influence that anybody has exercised.

**N**ow take the doctrines of the Bible: In all the other reformatations that came up, the leaders were unable to rightly distinguish between all error and truth, — the Sabbath day, Baptism, the nature of man, etc., — and so they openly taught errors from this book. But now, when we come to this movement, we find the wonderful power of discrimination on the part of the spirit of prophecy, and I do not know of a single truth in this Book that is sat aside by the spirit of prophecy, nor a single biblical or theological error that came down through the dark ages that has been fostered by the spirit of prophecy and pressed upon the people that we have to discredit when we come to this Book. The doctrines of baptism, the law, the place and value and dignity of the Holy Spirit in the church, and all the other teachings that we have, have been magnified by this gift among us.

Take another line, — the activities of the church. Here is our attitude toward foreign missions or world evangelism. Who among us has ever exercised greater influence than this gift in behalf of world evangelism?

Take the question of liberal, unselfish support of the work. When you go to those writings, you find them full of exhortations, and if we would live them out better than we do our gifts would be greater, and our progress would be more rapid.

Then take our attitude on our service that we are to render to our fellowmen, Christian help work, — all those activities where a Christian should be a real blessing, an unselfish individual in the community to help people in their sorrows and misfortunes, their poverty and sickness, and every way that they need help. We find that the writings of the spirit of prophecy abound with exhortations to an unselfish life in living among our fellowmen.

Take the question of health and the medical missionary work, and all these activities, and take the service that should be put forth in behalf of the young. Where do you find in any movement that we read about where better instruction has been given as to the attention that should be given to the young people. Take the question of education: Why, brethren, none of our teachers ever

have stood in advance of the counsel, that good wholesome instruction, that we find in the spirit of prophecy.

Those things I point to as really the convincing evidence of the origin of this gift, and the genuineness of it, — not to some ocular demonstrations that a few people have seen. I have no objections to persons speaking of those; but in close work with students I certainly would take the time to note down all these actual facts and hold them before the students, and show that from the beginning of this movement there has been inseparably and intimately and forcefully and aggressively connected with it this gift that has magnified everything good and has discounted, I think, everything bad. And if that is not evidence of the source of this gift among us, then I do not know what would be evidence.

**W. E. Howell:** I am sure the teachers would like to have some suggestions on the use of the spirit of prophecy and its writings in their teaching work.

**A. G. Daniells:** Well, give me a question that will be definite, in a particular way.

**C. L. Taylor:** I would like to ask you to discuss for us the exegetical value of the Testimonies. Of course I think it is generally understood by us that there are many texts to which she makes no reference. There are many texts that she explains, and there may be other explanations that are equally true that she does not touch. But my question is really this: May we accept the explanations of scripture that she gives? Are those dependable?

**A. G. Daniells:** I have always felt that they were. It may be that in some very critical matters there may be some difficulties; but I have used the writings for years in a way to clarify or elucidate the thought in the texts of scripture. Take "Desire of Ages" and "Patriarchs and Prophets." In reading them through I have found many instances of good illumination.

Does that answer your question? Do you mean whether students should resort to the writings for their interpretation of the Bible, or to get additional light? That is to say, is it necessary to have these writings in order to understand the Bible? must we go to her

explanations to get our meaning of the Bible? Is that the question or is that involved in it?

**C. L. Taylor:** Not directly, but possibly indirectly. But I will give a more concrete example. We will suppose that a student comes for help on a certain scripture, and wants to know what it means. Is it proper for the teacher to explain that scripture, with perhaps other scriptures illuminating the text, and then bring in the spirit of prophecy also as additional light on the text? Or suppose two students differ on the meaning of a text, and they come to the teacher to find out what it means: Should the teacher explain the text and then use the Testimonies to support the position he takes? Or take still a third case: Suppose that two brethren, both of them believers in the Testimonies, and of course believers in the Bible primarily, have a difference of opinion on a certain text: Is it right for them in their study of that text to bring in the spirit of prophecy to aid in their understanding of it, or should they leave that out of the question entirely?

**A. G. Daniells:** On that first point, I think this, that we are to get our interpretation from this Book, primarily. I think that the Book explains itself, and I think we can understand the Book, fundamentally, through the Book, without resorting to the Testimonies to prove up on it.

**W. E. Howell:** The Spirit of prophecy says the Bible is its own expositor.

**A. G. Daniells:** Yes, but I have heard ministers say that the spirit of prophecy is the interpreter of the Bible. I heard it preached at the General Conference some years ago, when it was said that the only way we could understand the Bible was through the writings of the spirit of prophecy.

**J. M. Anderson:** And he also said "infallible interpreter."

**C. M. Sorenson:** That expression has been canceled. That is not our position.

**A. G. Daniells:** It is not our position, and it is not right that the spirit of prophecy is the only safe interpreter of the Bible. That is a false doctrine, a false view. It will not stand. Why, my friends what would all the people have done from John's day down to the pres-



ent if there were no way to understand the Bible except through the writings of the spirit of prophecy! It is a terrible position to take! That is false, it is error. It is positively dangerous! What do those people do over in Roumania? We have hundreds of Sabbath-keepers there who have not seen a book on the spirit of prophecy? What do those people in China do? Can't they understand this Book only as we get the interpretation through the spirit of prophecy and then take it to them? That is heathenish!

**“It is not our position, and it is not right that the spirit of prophecy is the only safe interpreter of the Bible. That is a false doctrine, a false view . . . that is false, it is error. It is positively dangerous!”**

**L. L. Caviness:** Do you understand that the early believers got their understanding from the Bible, or did it come through the spirit of prophecy?

**A. G. Daniells:** They got their knowledge of the Scriptures as they went along through the Scriptures themselves. It pains me to hear the way some people talk, that the spirit of prophecy led out and gave all the instruction, all the doctrines, to the pioneers, and they accepted them right along. That is not according to the writings themselves, “Early Writings.” We are told how they did; they searched these scriptures together and studied and prayed over them until they got together on them. Sister White says in her works that for a long time she could not understand, that her mind was locked over these things, and the brethren worked their way along. She did not bring to this movement the Sabbath truth. She opposed the Sabbath truth. It did not seem right to her when Brother Bates presented it to her. But she had help from the Lord and when that clear knowledge was given her in that way, she was a weak child, and could not under-

stand theology, but she had a clear outline given to her, and from that day to her death she never wavered a minute. But the Lord did not by revelation give to another all that He had given in this Book. He gave this Book, and He gave men brains and thinking power to study the Book.

I would not, in my class work, give out the idea at all to students that they can not understand this book only through the writings of Sister White. I would hold out to students, as I do to preachers, and in ministerial meetings, the necessity of getting our understanding of the Bible from the Bible itself, and using the spirit of prophecy to enlarge our view. I tell them not to be lazy about studying the Book, and not to rummage around first for something that has been written on a point that they can just swallow without study. I think that would be a very dangerous thing for our ministers to get into that habit. And there are some, I must confess, who will hunt around to find a statement in the Testimonies and spend no time in deep study of the Book. They do not have a taste for it, and if they can look around and find something that is already made out, they are glad to pick that up and go along without studying the Bible. The earnest study of the Bible is the security, the safety of a man. He must come to the book itself and get it by careful study, and then whatever he finds in the spirit of prophecy or any other writings that will help him and throw light and clarify his vision on it, — that is alright. Does that cover your point?

**C. L. Taylor:** It does to a certain extent; and yet when you take the case of those two brethren who accept the Bible and the Testimonies, but still have a difference of interpretation that they want help on, — is it right for them to use the Testimonies in their study of that text, as well as the Bible?

**A. G. Daniells:** I think it is right to take the whole trend of teaching and thought that is put through the Testimonies on that subject. If I am perplexed about a text, and in my study of the spirit of prophecy I find something that makes it clear, I take that. I think Brother Prescott illustrates that in this matter of Matthew 24, of which there is a clear outline in the spirit of prophecy.



**W. W. Prescott:** For two or three years I spent a lot of time in the study of the 8th chapter of Daniel, to get what I thought to be the proper interpretation of that chapter. I got up to the point one time where I felt that I must get that clearer, where I could use it, and I made it the special subject of prayer. I was over in England, stopping at the home of a brother there. It came to me just like a voice, "Read what it says in 'Patriarchs and Prophets' on that subject." I turned right around to a book case back of me, and took up "Patriarchs and Prophets" and began to look through it. I came right to the chapter that dealt with the subject, and I found exactly the thing I wanted to clarify my mind on that subject. It greatly helped me. That, Brother Daniells, is my own personal experience over this matter that Brother Taylor raises.

In connection with what Brother Taylor has asked, I would like to suggest this, Whether a comment on the spirit of prophecy upon the Authorized Version establishes that version as the correct version against the Revised Version, where the reading is changed; and if one accepted the Revised Version, it would throw out the comment made in the spirit of prophecy. I have a definite case in mind.

**A. G. Daniells:** Just in addition to that other point: I had a similar experience when I was in Europe the last time, when I was greatly exercised about the finishing of this work. I felt so anxious about it, and I said, "Lord, what is the vital, important thing necessary to get this work finished?" I was at Friedensau, and in my room praying earnestly over that matter. And on my knees I took this little book, "Christ's Object Lessons," and began to read. I had really got weary with prayer, and stopped to read a little, and the first thing I found was this: [Not verified with the book] "\_\_\_\_\_ receive the Spirit of Christ, you will grow and bring forth fruit. Your faith will increase, your convictions deepen, your love be made perfect. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, etc. This fruit can never perish. When the fruit is brought forth, immediately He putteth in the sickle because the harvest is

ripe. That is the finish of the work. Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim His own. It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel! Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain."

I just stayed there on my knees and praised God for that gleam of light that came to me. It took that text in Mark, "When the fruit is brought forth, immediately He putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come." It shows just the steps to take. I have felt from that day to this that this denomination should be on its knees praying for the infilling of the Holy Spirit, that we might quickly finish the work.

So, Brother Taylor, I would feel that the view that would be made clear by the notes in the spirit of prophecy would be the safe view to take.

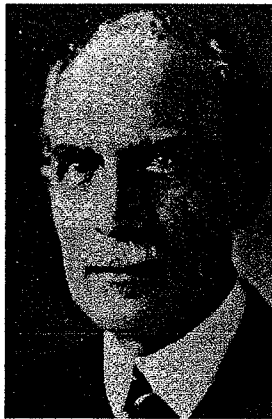
**W. E. Howell:** I had a little experience on that same point that came to me during this Conference, and it made an impression on my mind. I have always claimed a part of the fifth chapter of Hebrews for the teacher. I have resorted to it many times for help from a teacher's viewpoint. Last week we were studying here the divine call to teach, and I resorted to this chapter for some thought, and in connection with it I read a comment in the spirit of prophecy. I think the Spirit of the Lord led me to it. It says this is for the teacher: "He who seeks to transform humanity must himself understand humanity." I thought that was good for the teacher. "Only through sympathy, faith and love can men be reached and uplifted. Here Christ stands revealed as the Master-Teacher. Of all that ever dwelt on the earth, He alone has perfect understanding of the human soul." Then comes this scripture from the fifth of Hebrews: "We have not a high priest — Master-Teacher, for the priests were teachers — that can not be touched with the feelings of our infirmities,

one that hath not been in all points tempted like as we are." That brought a flash of light on the fifth chapter of Hebrews I had never received before. Then I took that idea of the high-priest being a master-teacher, and I found the best outline of the qualifications of a teacher I could find in any one place in the Bible; and now I claim the whole of the fifth chapter for the teacher.

**F. M. Wilcox:** I have a paragraph here I would like to read. This is so completely in harmony with what Brother Daniells has expressed that I thought I would like to read it. James White, in the *Review* of 1851, wrote this and it was republished again four years later, as expressing what he considered the denominational view with respect to the Testimonies back there:

#### "GIFTS OF THE GOSPEL CHURCH"

"The gifts of the Spirit should all have their proper places. The Bible is an everlasting rock. It is our rule of faith and practice. In it the man of God is 'thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' If every member of the church of Christ was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, and searched the Holy Scriptures diligently



W. E. Howell

and with much prayer for duty, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, we think, they would be able to learn their whole duty in 'all good works.' Thus 'the man of God may be perfect.' But as the reverse exists, and ever has existed, God in much mercy

has pitied the weakness of his people, and has set the gifts in the gospel church to correct our errors, and to lead us to his living Word. Paul says that they are for the 'perfecting of the saints,' 'till we all come in the unity of the faith.' The extreme necessity of the church in its imperfect state is God's opportunity to manifest the Spirit.

"Every Christian is therefore in duty bound to take the Bible as a perfect rule of faith and duty. He should pray fervently to be aided by the Holy Spirit in searching the Scriptures for the whole truth, and for his whole duty. He is not at liberty to turn from them to learn his duty through any of the gifts. We say that the very moment he does, he places the gifts in a wrong place, and takes an extremely dangerous position. The Word should be in front, the eye of the church should be placed upon it, as the rule to walk by, and the fountain of wisdom, from which to learn duty in 'all good works.' But if a portion of the church err from the truths of the Bible, and become weak and sickly, and the flock become scattered, so that it seems necessary for God to employ the gifts of the Spirit to correct, revive, and heal the erring, we should let him work. Yea, more, we should pray for him to work, and plead earnestly that he would work by the Spirit's power, and bring the scattered sheep to his fold. Praise the Lord, he will work. Amen." — *Review and Herald* of April 21, 1851.

We wrote the above article on the gifts of the gospel church four years since. It was published in the first volume of the *Review*. One object in republishing it is that our readers may see for themselves what our position has ever been on this subject, that they may be better prepared to dispose of the statements of those who seek to injure us.

The position that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the rule of faith and duty, does not shut out the gifts which God set in the church. To reject them is shutting out that part of the Bible which presents them. We say, Let us have a whole Bible, and let that, and that alone, be our rule of faith and

duty. Place the gifts where they belong, and all is harmony. — *Review and Herald of October 3, 1854.*

**W. W. Prescott:** How should we use the writings of the spirit of prophecy as an authority by which to settle historical questions?

**A. G. Daniells:** Well, now, as I understand it, Sister White never claimed to be an authority on history, and never claimed to be a dogmatic teacher on theology. She never outlined a course of theology, like Mrs. Ed- dy's book on teaching. She just gave out fragmentary statements, but left the pastors and evangelists and preachers to work out all these problems of scripture and of theology

**“Sister White never claimed to be an authority on history, and never claimed to be a dogmatic teacher on theology. She never outlined a course of theology . . . .”**

and of history. She never claimed to be an authority on history; and as I have understood it, where the history that related to the interpretation of prophecy was clear and expressive, she wove it into her writings; but I have always understood that, as far as she was concerned, she was ready to correct in revision such statements as she thought should be corrected. I have never gone to her writings, and taken the history that I found in her writings, as the positive statement of history regarding the fulfillment of prophecy. I do not know how others may view that, but I have felt that I should deal with history in the same way that I am exhorted to deal with the Bible, — prove it all carefully and thoroughly, and then let her go on and make such revisions from time to time as seem best.

Just one more thought: Now you know something about that little book, “The Life of Paul.” You know the difficulty we got into about that. We could never claim inspiration in the whole thought and makeup of the book, because it has been thrown aside

because it was badly put together. Credits were not given to the proper authorities, and some of that crept into “The Great Controversy,” — the lack of credits; and in the revision of that book those things were carefully run down and made right. Personally that has never shaken my faith, but there are men who have been greatly hurt by it, and I think it is because they claimed too much for these writings. Just as Brother White says, there is a danger in going away from the Book, and claiming too much. Let it have its full weight, just as God has fixed it, and then I think we will stand without being shaken when some of these things do appear that we can not harmonize with our theory.

**W. W. Prescott:** There is another experience that you know of that applies to what Brother Taylor has brought up. Some of the brethren here remember very well a serious controversy over the interpretation of the 8th chapter of Daniel, and there were some of the brethren who ranged themselves against what was called the new view, and they took her writings to uphold their position. She wrote to those brethren and instructed them not to use her writings to settle that controversy. I think that ought to be remembered as being her own counsel when brethren that did claim to believe the Bible and the spirit of prophecy were divided over an interpretation, and it was a matter of public controversy.

**J. N. Anderson:** How far would you take that word from Sister White to be a general statement about her writings?

**A. G. Daniells:** I think it was especially on the case then, but I think we have to use the same judgment about using her writings in other cases.

**C. A. Shull:** Just how shall we use the Testimonies in the class room? What shall be our attitude toward them in the line of history, especially? Before I knew that there was any statement in the spirit of prophecy regarding the experience of John, I stated to the class that there was a tradition that John had been thrown into a caldron of boiling oil, and a student immediately produced that statement in the Testimonies that John *was* thrown into the boiling oil. Now, I want to know, was she given a divine revelation that

John was thrown into a vat of boiling oil?

Now another question, on the taking of Babylon. Mrs. White in the spirit of prophecy mentions that Babylon was taken according to the historian, by the turning aside of the waters. Modern scholarship says it was not taken that way. What should be our attitude in regard to such things?

**Mrs. Williams:** We have that question to meet every year.

**E. F. Albertsworth:** I have been confronted in my classes by students who come with the Testimonies and endeavor to settle a question by quoting where she says, "I have been shown." They said that of all things that must settle the matter. I have wanted to know what attitude we should take on a question of that kind.

**C. P. Bollman:** Wouldn't that latter question require a concrete example?

**A. G. Daniells:** Yes, I think it would.

**E. F. Albertsworth:** I do not recall the example; but some of the students would say that meant she had a direct revelation, and others would say that meant that she was shown by people around her.

**A. G. Daniells:** I do not think that is what she means when she says that. When she was shown, it was by the angel or the revelation that was made to her. I feel sure that was her meaning.

**E. F. Albertsworth:** I have found students who had doubts about that.

**W. G. Wirth:** Suppose we do have a conflict between the authorized and revised versions?

**A. G. Daniells:** That question was up before. You must not count me an authority for I am just like you in the matter. I have to form my own opinions. I do not think Sister White meant at all to establish the certainty of a translation. I do not think she had that in mind, or had anything to do with putting her seal of approval on the authorized version or on the revised version when she quoted that. She uses whichever version helps to bring out the thought she has most clearly.

With reference to this historical matter, I cannot say anything more than I have said, that I never have understood that Sister

White undertook to settle historical questions. I visited her once over this matter of the "daily," and I took along with me that old chart, — as early a chart as we have access to, —

**C. P. Bollman:** The same chart that Elder Haskell sells?

**A. G. Daniells:** Yes, it was that same chart. I took that and laid it on her lap, and I took "Early Writings" and read it to her, and then I told her of the controversy. I spent a long time with her. It was one of her days when she was feeling cheery and rested, and so I explained it to her quite fully. I said, "Now here you say that you were shown that the view of the 'daily' that the brethren held was correct. Now," I said, "there are two parts here in this 'daily' that you quote. One is this period of time, the 2300 years, and the other is what the 'daily' itself was."

I went over that with her, and every time, as quick as I would come to that time, she would say, "Why, I *know* what was shown me, that that period of 2300 days was fixed, and that there would be no definite time after that. The brethren were right when they reached that 1844 date."

Then I would leave that, and I would go on about this "Daily." "Why," she said, "Brother Daniells, I do not know what that 'daily' is, whether it is paganism or Christ's ministry. That was not the thing that was shown me." And she would go into that twilight zone right away. Then when I would come back to the 2300 years, she would straighten right up and say, "That is the thing we never can move away from. I tell you, you never can move away from that 2300 year period. It was shown to me that that was fixed."

And I believe it was, brethren. You might just as well try to move me out of the world as to try to move me on that question, — not because she says it, but I believe it was clearly shown to her by the Lord. But on this other, when she says she was not shown what the "daily" was, I believe that, and I take "Early Writings" 100% on that question of the "daily," fixing that period. That is the thing she talks about, and I take the Bible with it, and I take the Bible as to what the "daily" itself is.

So when it comes to those historical questions about the taking of Babylon, I think this, brethren, we ought not to let every little statement in history that we find lead us away from the spirit of prophecy. You know historians contradict each other, don't you? Of course your work is to get back, get back, *get back* to the fountain head, the original thing; and when you get back there, and get it perfectly clear, I do not believe that if Sister White were here to speak to you today, she would authorize you to take a historical fact, supposed to be a fact, that she had incorporated in the book, and put it up against an actual thing in history. We talked with her about that when "Great Controversy" was being revised, and I have letters in my file in the vault there where we were warned against using Sister White as a historian. She never claimed to be that. We were warned against setting up statements found in her writings against the various history that there is on a fact. That is where I stand. I do not have to meet it with students, and I do not have to explain myself in a congregation. I suppose I have it easier than you teachers do.

**W. W. Prescott:** On that very point you mention as to the capture of Babylon, one of the most recent editions of the Bible (?) takes the position of Herodotus against the ———, and he says: "Why should we discount the writings on parchment in favor of the writings on clay?"

**A. G. Daniells:** That is what I mean, — that we should not allow every historical statement that we find that contradicts the Testimonies to set us wild. If there are two authorities of equal value on that point, bring up the authority that is in harmony with what we have.

**C. A. Shull:** We teachers have a great responsibility on us to take the right attitude. If we say that a certain thing in the Testimonies is not correct, students are likely to carry away the impression that we do not have faith in the Testimonies.

**A. G. Daniells:** There are two ways to hurt students in this matter. One way is to discount the Testimonies and cast a little bit of question and doubt on them. I would never do that, brethren, in the school room.

No matter how much I was perplexed, I would never cast a doubt in the mind of a student. I would take hours to explain matters to ground the student in it. Casting doubts and reflections is one way to hurt a student. Another way is to take an extreme and unwarranted position. You can do that and pass it over; but when that student gets out and gets in contact with things, he may be shaken, and perhaps shaken clear out and away. I think we should be candid and honest and never put a claim forth that is not well founded simply to appear to believe. You will have to be careful in giving this instruction, because many of the students have heard from their parents things that are not so, and they hear from preachers things that are not so, and so their foundation is false.

I must refer again to the attitude of A. T. Jones. In his heyday you know he just drank



F. M. Wilcox

the whole thing in, and he would hang a man on a word. I have seen him take just a word in the Testimonies and hang to it, and that would settle everything, — just a word. I was with him when he made a discovery, — or, if he didn't make it, he appeared to make it, — and that was that there were words in the Testimonies and writings of Sister White that God did not order her to put in there, that there were words which she did not put in by divine inspiration, the Lord picking the words, but that somebody had helped to fix that up. And so he took two testimonies and compared them, and he got into great trouble. He went on with Dr. Kellogg, where he could just pick things to pieces.

**F. M. Wilcox:** Back in the 60's or 70's a

General Conference in session passed this resolution, — they said, we recognize that the Testimonies have been prepared under great pressure and stress of circumstances, and that the wording is not always the happiest, and we recommend their republication with such changes as will bring them to a standard.

**A. G. Daniells:** I would like to get hold of that resolution. Now, brethren, I want to ask you honestly if there is a man here who has had doubt created in your mind from my attitude and the positions I have taken? [VOICES: No! No!] Or is there one of you that thinks I am shaky on the Testimonies? — I will not say that [. . .] thinks my position is not just right, for you might not agree with me, but from what I have said, is there a tendency to lead you to believe that I am shaky, and that some time I will help to get you away from the Testimonies? [Several decided no's were heard.]

**C. L. Taylor:** In your talk a few evenings ago I agreed 100% in everything you said. Today there is just one question in my mind.

**A. G. Daniells:** Let us have it.

**C. L. Taylor:** That is regarding those outward manifestations, those things of perhaps a miraculous nature. I do not know whether you intend to carry the impression that you discredit those or that you simply would not teach them. If it is that you would not hold them up as proof that the work is inspired, I am heartily in agreement with that. On the other hand, if you take the position that those things are not to be relied on, that Elder Loughborough and others are mistaken about these things, I should have to disagree with you.

**A. G. Daniells:** No, I do not discount them nor disbelieve them; but they are not the kind of evidence I would use with students or with unbelievers.

**C. L. Taylor:** I agree with that.

**A. G. Daniells:** I do not question them, but I do not think they are the best kind of evidence to produce. For instance, I do not think the best kind of proof for me to give an audience on the Sabbath question or the nature of man or baptism, is to go and read Sister White's writings to them. I believe the best proof I can give is the Bible. Perhaps you

will remember that it fell to me to preach Sister White's funeral sermon; and if you will remember, I took that occasion to give evidence of her high calling. I did not give a long list of fruits and miraculous evidences. I knew the matter would be published to the world in hundreds of papers, and I wanted to give them something that would be a high authority, and this is what I gave:

First, that she stood with the word of God from Genesis to Revelation in all its teaching.

Then, she stood with mankind in his highest endeavors to help mankind, — elaborating on those points.

That is what I mean, Brother Taylor; but I do not discount those other things.

**W**hat I want to know is this, brethren: Does my position appear to be of such a character that you would be led to think I am shaky? [VOICES: No!] If you think it, just say it right out! I do not want to do that, but I have to be honest, — I can not camouflage in a thing like this. I have stood through it about forty years unshaken, and I think it is a safe position; but if I were driven to take the position that some do on the Testimonies, I would be shaken. [VOICE: That's right!] I would not know where to stand, for I can not say that white is black and black is white.

**H. C. Lacey:** To us there is no doubt that you believe the Testimonies, but will you mind my adding another personal note to it?

**A. G. Daniells:** No.

**H. C. Lacey:** It is this: Those who have not heard you, as we have here, and are taking the other side of the question, — some of them are deliberately saying that neither you nor Professor Prescott believe the Testimonies. For instance, I went out to Mt. Vernon and I met the graduating class there, and when the exercises were over, I had a private talk with three or four of those young people, and they told me that they certainly understood that our General Conference men down here — they did not mean me or Brother Sorenson — did not believe the Testimonies.

**W. W. Prescott:** You are not telling us news.



**H. C. Lacey:** We as teachers are in a terribly hard position. We have got nearly down to bed-rock in the questions that have been asked here; but the students do get *right down to bed-rock* on some of these things, and we need to get a little deeper here. There are people here at these meetings who do not dare to ask certain questions that have come up in their minds or in private talks. But you know that the teacher is in a very difficult position.

On that matter of the capture of Babylon, I have felt free to say that I thought the evidence was that Cyrus did not capture it that way, but we would hold the matter in abeyance and simply study it. Suppose now that further tablets would come to light, and other evidence would be brought in to prove indisputably that Cyrus did not capture Babylon that way, would it be right to say that if there is a revision of that book, — “Patriarchs and Prophets,” which indorses, in one casual sentence, that old view, — the revision would be brought into harmony with recently discovered facts?

**A. G. Daniells:** I think that is the position Sister White occupies. I think that is what she has done. I never understood that she put infallibility into the historical quotations.

**H. C. Lacey:** But there are some who *do* understand it.

**W. W. Prescott:** It is interesting to know that even a higher critic like George Adams Smith agrees with Herodotus (?) on that.

Brother Daniells was speaking about this question of physical outward evidences. One of those evidences has been that the eyes were open, as you will remember, and this scripture in the 24th chapter of Numbers is always referred to, showing that it is in harmony with that. But you read the Revised Version, and you find it reads, “And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor saith, And the man whose eye was closed saith.” In this text it puts it just the other way. Then I would not want to use that as an argument, that the prophet’s eyes were open.

**A. G. Daniells:** That is what I mean by referring to secondary matters.

**H. C. Lacey:** In our estimate of the spirit of prophecy, isn’t its value to us more in the spiritual light it throws into our own hearts

and lives than in the intellectual accuracy in historical and theological matters. Ought we not to take those writings as the voice of the Spirit of our hearts, instead of as the voice of the teacher to our heads? And isn’t the final proof of the spirit of prophecy its spiritual value rather than its historical accuracy?

**A. G. Daniells:** Yes, I think so.

**J. N. Anderson:** Would you set about to explain things as you have this morning? Would you explain that you do not think the Testimonies are to be taken as final in the matter of historical data, etc., so as to justify a position?

**A. G. Daniells:** Who gives the teaching in the school on the spirit of prophecy? Is it the Bible teacher? How do you get that question before the students?

**C. L. Taylor:** Both Bible and history teachers catch it.

**W. H. Wakeham:** It comes up in every Bible class.

**H. C. Lacey:** Wouldn’t it be a splendid thing if a little pamphlet were written setting forth in plain, simple, straight-forward style the facts as we have them, — simple, sacred facts, — so that we could put them into the hands of inquiring students?

**Voice:** Our enemies would publish it everywhere.

**C. L. Benson:** I think it would be a splendid thing if our brethren were a little conservative on these things. We had a man come to our Union and spend an hour and a half on the evidences of the spirit of prophecy through Sister White. The impression was conveyed that practically every word that she spoke, and every letter she wrote, whether personal or otherwise, was a divine inspiration. Those things make it awfully hard for our teachers and ministers.

**W. G. Wirth:** I want to second what Professor Lacey has brought out. I wish you general men would get out something for us, because we are the ones that suffer.

**W. W. Prescott:** To my certain knowledge, a most earnest appeal was made for that from her office to issue such a statement, and they would not do it.

**C. P. Bollman:** It wasn't made to her, though.

**W. W. Prescott:** No, but it was made to those who were handling her manuscripts.

**A. G. Daniells:** Some of those statements like what Brother Wilcox read here this morning have been up a number of times, and Brother White always took a good sensible position.

**W. W. Prescott:** Brother Wilcox had a letter from Sister White herself that he read.

**A. G. Daniells:** When these things were under pretty sharp controversy, W. C. White, for his mother, sent out things that we had in our vaults here that greatly modified this, and helped to smooth out these wrinkles and get a reasonable ground on which to stand. I do not know but what perhaps the General Conference Committee might appoint a committee to do this, and have reliable, responsible men that the people do not question at all take hold of that and bring out these facts. It does seem to me that in our schools there ought to be an agreement among the teachers. The history and Bible teachers and others that have to do with these things should get together and have their

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stories and their teaching alike, if possible. The truth should be given to those students, and when you give the truth to them you will have them founded and established on this without trouble. But when these erroneous views are given them, they get a false idea and then there is danger when an honest man takes the true side and states his position.

**W. E. Howell:** It seems to me that the point is of very great importance. I have been

somewhat perplexed on this matter. We have talked over things very freely and frankly here at the other meeting and at this, and I think the teachers here at [sic] all satisfied as to the place that is to be given to the spirit of prophecy in its relation to their work. But these teachers, when they get back to their places of work, will have all kinds of questions put to them, and it has been a question with me as to how far a teacher ought to go with a class of young people or with an indiscriminate body to deal with and attempt to bring out the things that they have heard here and have received and believed for themselves. I think there is where the difficulty is going to be. We have only two teachers here out of an entire faculty. Some other member of the faculty might not be cleared up on these things. There may be teachers who are endeavoring to teach science out of the spirit of prophecy; or another teacher who has not had the benefit of this discussion, may have some other viewpoint. And it really puts these teachers in a very hard situation. If there is anything that can be done by way of putting something in the hands of the teachers so that they could give the true representation in the matter, I think it would be a very great help.

**W. W. Prescott:** Can you explain how it is that two brethren can disagree on the inspiration of the Bible, one holding to the verbal inspiration and the other opposed to it, and yet no disturbance be created in the denomination whatever. That situation is right here before us. But if two brethren take the same attitude on the spirit of prophecy, one holding to verbal inspiration and the other discrediting it, he that does not hold to the verbal inspiration is discredited.

**F. M. Wilcox:** Do you believe that a man who doesn't believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible believes the Bible?

**W. W. Prescott:** I do not have any trouble over it at all. I have a different view myself. If a man does not believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, he is still in good standing; but if he says he does not believe in the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies, he is discounted right away. I think it is an unhealthy situation. It puts the spirit of prophecy above the Bible.



**W. G. Wirth:** Really, that is my biggest problem. I shall certainly be discredited if I go back and give this view. I would like to see some published statement given out by those who lead this work so that if that thing should come up there would be some authority back of it, because I am in for a lot of trouble on that thing. I would like to see something done, because that education is going right on, and our students are being sent out with the idea that the Testimonies are verbally inspired, and woe be to the man out where I am that does not line up to that.

Now as to health reform: Frequently a student will come to me and quote what Sister White says about butter. But we serve butter on our tables right along. And they will bring up about meat, how under no consideration is that to be eaten. And I know that that is unreasonable, and there are times when it is necessary to eat meat. What shall we do about that? I would like a little light on some of those details, as to whether we ought to take them at full value.

**A. G. Daniells:** I am willing to answer part of that, for I have had it about a thousand times. Take this question of health reform. It is well known from the writings themselves and from personal contact with Sister White, and from common sense, that in traveling and in knowledge of different parts of the world, that the instruction set forth in the Testimonies was never intended to be one great wholesale blanket regulation for peoples' eating and drinking, and it applies to various individuals according to their physical condition and according to the situation in which they find themselves. I have always explained it that way to our ministers in ministers' meetings. We had a ministers' meeting over in Scandinavia, and we had one man there from the "land of the midnight sun," up in Hammerfest where you never grow a banana or an apple or a peach, and hardly even a green thing. It is snow and cold there nearly all the time, and the people live to a large extent on fish and various animal foods that they get there. We had sent a nurse from Christiania up there as a missionary. He had the strict idea of the diet according to the Testimonies, and he would not touch a fish

or a bit of reindeer, nor any kind of animal food, and he was getting poor; because missionaries that are sent out do not have much money, and they cannot import fresh fruits; and it was in the days when even canned goods were not shipped much. The fellow nearly starved to death. He came down to attend that meeting, and he was nearly as white as your dress [speaking to Sister Williams]. He had hardly any blood in his body. I talked to him, and I said, "Brother Olson, what is the matter with you? We will have to



W. W. Prescott

bring you away from up there if you do not get better. You have no red blood corpuscles in your blood." I talked with him a while, and finally asked him, "What do you live on?"

"Well," he said, "I live a good deal on the north wind."

I said, "You look like it, sure enough."

We went on talking, and I found out that the man wasn't eating much but potatoes and starchy foods, — just a limited dietary. I went at him with all the terror I could inspire for such foolishness.

**Voice:** Did you make any impression?

**A. G. Daniells:** Yes, I did. And I got other brethren to join me. We told that man he would be buried up there if he tried to live that way. We talked with him straight about it.

When I got back to this country I talked with Sister White about it, and she said, "Why don't the people use common sense? Why don't they know that we are to be governed by the places we are located?" You will

find in a little testimony a caution thrown out, modifying the extreme statements that were made.

**F. M. Wilcox:** Sister White says in a copy of the *Instructor* that there are some classes that she would not say should not eat some meat.

**A. G. Daniells:** There are very conscientious men and ministers who are very much afraid they will eat something they ought not to. On that very point Paul says that the kingdom of God is not meat or drink, but righteousness and peace; and we are working and trying to get through to the kingdom just as much on the ground of works by eating or not eating as by any other thing in this world. You never can put down vegetarianism as the way to heaven. I have been over in India where they are mighty strict about their eating, but they do not get righteousness that way.

**C. L. Taylor:** It is true of all works, isn't it?

**A. G. Daniells:** Certainly. You take men who have never allowed a piece of animal food to pass their lips, and some of them are the most tyrannical, brutal men; and when we try to reach them with the gospel, we have to tell them that is not the way to God, that they will have to come and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and have His righteousness imputed to them on confession, forgiveness, and all of that. We have people among us that are just as much in danger of trying to establish this righteousness by works in the matter of the dietary as the world has seen in any thing. You know from what Sister White brought out on the matter of righteousness that it was not her purpose to put down eating and drinking as the way to heaven. It has its place. It is important, and I would not want to see this denomination swing away over to the position of other denominations; but I do not like to hear of teaching that would lead this people to fall back on eating and drinking for righteousness, for Paul said that is not the way. I do not think proper caution was used in putting out some of these things, and I have told Sister White so.

**Mrs. Williams:** You mean in publishing them?

**A. G. Daniells:** Yes, when they were written. I told Sister White that it seems to me that if conditions in the arctic regions and in the heart of China and other places had been taken into account, some of those things would have been modified. "Why," she said, "yes, if the people are not going to use their judgment, then of course we will have to fix it for them." It seemed so sensible to me. Sister White was never a fanatic, she was never an extremist. She was a level-headed woman. She was well-balanced. I found that so during a period of 40 years of association with her. When we were down in Texas, and old Brother White was breaking down, that woman just got the most beautiful venison every day to eat, and my wife cooked it; and he would sit down and eat some of that and say, "O, Ellen, that is just the thing!" She did not hold him up and make him live on a diet of starch! I always found her well-balanced. There are some people who are extremists, who are fanatical; but I do not think we should allow those people to fix the platform and guide this denomination. I do not propose to do it, for one. And yet I believe that we should use all the caution and all the care that is set out for the maintenance of health. And brethren, I have tried to do it, but I have not lived all my life on the strictest dietary set down there. I have had to go all over this world, and as you know, I have had to be exposed to all the disease germs. I have had to live on a very spare dietary in places in my travel, and I have lived on wheels, and under great pressure, and it was prophesied when I went into this in 1901 that a decade would finish me, and I would either be a broken-down old man on the shelf or in the grave. That is the way my friends talked, and they sympathized with me, and regretted that I ever took this position; but I said to myself, "By the grace of God, I will live in every possible way just right as far as I know it, to conserve my strength." This is my 19th year, and I am not broken down, and I am not on the shelf or in the grave. I am strong and well. I am weary, but I can get rested. I have tried to be honest and to be true to my sense of what was the right thing to do, and it has kept me well and strong. That is the basis on which I

propose to work. I do not propose to have any extremist lay down the law to me as to what I shall eat up in the heart of China. I propose to use my sense as to what I ought to eat in those places where you can not get a green thing, hardly.

**Mrs. Williams:** In the interior of Africa,

**“We have got the idea that we have got to just assume full and complete knowledge of everything about the spirit of prophecy and take an extreme position in order to be loyal and to be true to it.”**

we had to cook everything we ate, so as to kill the germs.

**A. G. Daniells:** Why, yes, in China you must sterilize your hands and your knife, and if you eat an apple, it must be sterilized after it is peeled, and even then it is not always safe. I do not think we have to take an extreme position on the question of the diet for all classes. We are not all alike. What is good for one man is not good for another. I have seen Elder Irwin sit down and eat two or three raw apples at night just before going to bed; but one apple at night would upset me so that my tongue would be covered with fur and my head all swelled up. I would not eat one if you would give me five dollars. I count that health reform, to reject that which I know injures me and take that which I know strengthens me and maintains me in the strongest physical trim for service and hard work. That is my health reform. Raw apples are good for people that have the right digestion for them; but if a person hasn't that sort of digestion, he must lay down the law, No raw apples for him.

That is the way a lot of things got into the Testimonies. They were many of them written for individuals in various states of health, and then they were hurried into the Testimonies without proper modification. That is not to say that they are false things, but it is

to say that they do not apply to every individual the world over alike. And you can not put a health-reform regime or rule down for the whole world alike, because of the different physical conditions that maintain. That is what I tell in ministers' meetings and I do not think I destroy the force of the message at all, only to the extremist.

**Brother Waldorf:** I have had no trouble for over twenty years with the spirit of prophecy or with the Bible. The more I have studied both the more firmly I have become convinced on this platform. I have read the whole of higher criticism right through, and the other side of it. There are 50,000 different readings in the Bible. There are many mistakes that were made in transcribing. Now in the matter of historical complication, I take the Bible and the spirit of prophecy exactly alike.

**A. G. Daniells:** Here is one illustration of a mistake in the Bible: In Samuel it says a man lifted up his hand against 800 men whom he slew; then in Chronicles this same thing is spoken of, and it says that he lifted up his hand against 300 men, whom he slew.

**Waldorf:** I have never held up the spirit of prophecy as being infallible. But students come to me from different teachers, having different views. One comes and says Professor Lacey taught me this way, and another comes from Professor Johnson who taught him some other way. There are lots of them coming to the medical college that way from different teachers. They do not know whether every word of the spirit of prophecy is inspired or not. I teach them this way: That when this message was first started, God brought this gift of prophecy into the church, and through this gift God has approved of the major doctrines that we hold right down from 1844. I for one hold that the gift of the spirit of prophecy was given to us in order to get the mold, lest we should trust human reasoning and modern scholarship, for I believe that modern scholarship has gone bankrupt when it comes to Greek and Hebrew.

As for meat eating, I haven't touched meat for twenty-one years; but I buy meat for my wife. I often go into a butcher shop

and get the very best they have in order to keep her in life. I never will use the Testimonies as a sledge hammer on my brother.

**A. G. Daniells:** I will tell you one thing, a great victory will be gained if we get a liberal spirit so that we will treat brethren who differ with us on the interpretation of the Testimonies in the same Christian way we treat them when they differ on the interpretation of the Bible. That will be a good deal gained, and it is worth gaining, I want to tell you, for I have been under criticism ever since the controversy started in Battle Creek. Isn't it a strange thing that when I and some of my associates fought that heresy year after year, and we got message after message from the spirit of prophecy — some of them very comforting and uplifting messages — and all that time we were counted as heretics on the spirit of prophecy? How do you account for that? Why didn't the spirit of prophecy get after us? I claim that I know as well as any man whether I believe in the spirit of prophecy or not. I do not ask people to accept my views, but I would like the confidence of brothers where we differ in interpretation. If we can engender that spirit, it will be a great help; and I believe we have to teach it right in our schools.

Suppose students come to you with questions about the Bible that you do not know what to do with, — or do you always know? I would like to go to a teacher for a year that would tell me everything in here that puzzles me! What do you do when students come to you with such questions?

**W. H. Wakeham:** I tell them I do not know, and I do not lose their confidence, either.

**A. G. Daniells:** Well, when they come to you with something in the spirit of prophecy that is puzzling, why not say, as Peter did, that there are some things hard to be understood. I do not think that destroys the confidence of the people. But we have got the idea that we have got to just assume full and complete knowledge of everything about the spirit of prophecy and take an extreme position in order to be loyal and to be true to it.

**W. E. Howell:** I just want to remark two things. One is on the question Professor Prescott raised on our previous meeting as to

why people take these different attitudes toward a man on the Bible and on the Testimonies. I am not philosopher enough to explain an attitude of that sort, but I do think that the cause of it lies primarily in the making of extreme and radical positions. I think that is where the root of the difficulty lies, especially with reference to the spirit of prophecy.

Brother Daniells and Brother Prescott and others have come in here with us and have talked very frankly with us, and I am sure every man here will say that they have not covered up anything. They have not withheld from you anything that you have asked for that they could give you in reference to this matter. I do not doubt that it is your experience as it is mine, when I go out from Washington, to hear it said that Brother Daniells or Brother Prescott does not believe the spirit of prophecy.

**A. G. Daniells:** Brother Spicer, too.

**W. E. Howell:** Yes, and Brother Spicer. I feel confident of this, that as you go out from this council you can be a great help in setting people straight on these things, and I believe it is our privilege to do it, brethren, to help the people on these points. Many of them are sincere and honest in that position, from what they have heard. I think it is our duty to help such persons all we can as we meet them.

**C. L. Benson:** Is this subject going to be dropped here? From what Brother Daniells has said, I know what it is going to mean to some of our schools and to our General Conference men. I feel it would be unfair to us as teachers to go back and make any statement. Letters have already come in, asking about the general men with reference to interpreting the spirit of prophecy. I do not think it is fair for us to go out and try to state the position of our General Conference men. On the other hand, I know the feeling and doctrine as taught in our conferences, and they are the Bible teachers of the people; and if our Bible and history teachers take these liberal position on the spirit of prophecy, our schools are going to be at variance entirely with the field. Our people are beginning to wonder about the condition our schools are in. They say they read in the *Review* of this

spirit of paganism, and they say those articles surely would not have been published in the *Review* if these conditions did not exist in our own schools? Why, what would they be putting it in the *Review* for if that were not the case? That is a fact, many of our people take the position that those articles were written because of conditions existing in our own schools. I think we ought to get down to a solution of this thing if we can, and start some kind of a campaign of education. Out in the field we have stressed the importance of the spirit of prophecy more than the Bible, and many of our men are doing it right along. They tell of the wonderful phenomena, and many times they get their entire sermon from the spirit of prophecy instead of the Bible. If a break comes between our schools and the field we are in a serious place.

**T. M. French:** I believe it would help us a great deal if some general statement were issued, and if some of this matter that has

been brought up could be given, showing that we are not shifting our position, that we are viewing the spirit of prophecy as it has been viewed all along. I believe it would help to settle the situation in our conferences, and would be a great help both to the conferences and to the schools. I am sure from what has been read here of letters and resolutions of the past that we have not shifted our position, but the matter is just up again; and if we could get out statements as to our attitude all along, and restate the matter, I believe it would do much good.

**W. E. Howell:** The next topic we have is a consideration of how to teach the spirit of prophecy in our schools. In our recent general educational convention we provided for a semester's work in the curriculum in this subject. I think we ought to take ten minutes' intermission, and then take up this topic, which will give opportunity for further questions along this line.

# Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy As Related to The Inspiration of the Bible

August 1, 1919

**W. E. Howell,** Chairman: The topic for this hour, as arranged for on Wednesday, is a continuation, in a measure, of our consideration of the spirit of prophecy, and the subject of inspiration connected with that, as related to the inspiration of the Bible. This hour is not intended to be a formal discourse, occupying the whole period, but Brother Daniells will lead in the topic, and then he has

expressed a wish that it might be a kind of round-table in which we will study things together.

**A. G. Daniells:** Brother Chairman, I think there has been a misunderstanding among us. I protested against taking such a heavy topic the other day, under the circumstances, and I dismissed it from my mind, and have been thinking along another line, that of pastoral training, and a further discus-

spirit of paganism, and they say those articles surely would not have been published in the *Review* if these conditions did not exist in our own schools? Why, what would they be putting it in the *Review* for if that were not the case? That is a fact, many of our people take the position that those articles were written because of conditions existing in our own schools. I think we ought to get down to a solution of this thing if we can, and start some kind of a campaign of education. Out in the field we have stressed the importance of the spirit of prophecy more than the Bible, and many of our men are doing it right along. They tell of the wonderful phenomena, and many times they get their entire sermon from the spirit of prophecy instead of the Bible. If a break comes between our schools and the field we are in a serious place.

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sion of the question we had before us. I would not feel free, under the circumstances, to give a talk on the subject that I understand was looked for.

As you know, there are two views held by eminent men regarding the verbal inspiration of the Bible. You read their views in the books they have put out. One man, — scholarly, devout, earnest, a full believer in the Bible in every sense of the word, — believes that it was a revelation of truth to the writers, and they were allowed to state that truth as best they could. Another man — equally scholarly and pious and earnest in his faith — believes that it was a word-for-word inspiration or revelation, that the actual words were given, — that every word in the original, as it was written by the prophets down from Moses to Malachi, was given to them by the Lord. These men differ, and differ honestly and sincerely; and they have their followers among us, right here at the conference, both of them; and I see nothing to be gained by a man in my position, with my knowledge of these things, attempting to prove up on this. I do not wish to do it. We would all remain of the same opinion, I think, as we are now; so I want to beg you to allow me to dismiss that part of it, and either go directly into the other question of pastoral training or open the way for further questions and discussions of the matter we had before us. I feel more at home in that, for all these years since the Battle Creek controversy began I have been face to face with this question of the Testimonies. I have met all the doubters, the chief ones, and have dealt with it in ministerial institutes, and have talked it over and over until I am thoroughly familiar with it, whether I am straight or not. I do not know that there is a crook or a kink in it that I have not heard brought up by these men that have fallen away from us. I would be willing to hear further questions and further discussion, if it is the wish of the convention.

**W. E. Howell:** I am sure I do not want Brother Daniells to feel that he is disappointing us in any real sense this morning; and if I understand the wishes of the teachers, it has not been that he should discuss so much the rather technical question of the verbal or truth-revealed inspiration of the Bible, but

rather that he will give us some further instruction along the line of the inspiration of the spirit of prophecy and its relation to that of the Bible. I have nothing further to press along that line, but as teachers have expressed themselves to me, I have felt that it might be well to consider some aspects of that question a little further, particularly the use of unpublished writings, letters, talks, etc, in the light of what was referred to here the other day. Sister White herself said that if we wanted to know what the spirit of prophecy said on a thing, we should read her published writings. That is one question I think the teachers have in mind, Brother Daniells.

**F. M. Wilcox:** I have enjoyed these discussions very much. I enjoyed the evening of last week when the question of the spirit of prophecy was considered. I enjoyed very much the talk Elder Daniells gave on the question, and I think the view he took of the question very fully agrees with my own view. I have known for long years the way in which Sister White's works were brought together and her books compiled. I have never believed in the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies. I must say, however, that last Wednesday evening and also since then, some remarks have been made without proper safeguarding, and I should question the effect of those statements and positions out in the field. I know that there is considerable talk around Takoma Park over positions that have been taken here, and there will be that same situation out in the field. As Brother Wakeham suggested the other day, I think we have to deal with a very delicate question, and I would hate terribly to see an influence sweep over the field and into any of our schools that the Testimonies were discounted. There is great danger of a reaction, and I do feel concerned.

**I** have heard questions raised here that have left the impression on my mind that if the same questions are raised in our classes when we get back to our schools, we are going to have serious difficulty. I believe there are a great many questions that we should hold back, and not discuss. I am not a teacher in a school, although I did teach the



Bible 13 years in a nurses' training school, where I had a large number of young people; but I can not conceive that it is necessary for us to answer every question that is put to us by students or others, or be driven into a place where we will take a position that will lessen faith. I think the Testimonies of the Spirit of God are a great asset to this denomination, and I think if we destroy faith in them, we are going to destroy faith in the very foundation of our work. I must say that I do view with a great deal of concern the

**“Is it well to let our people in general go on holding to the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies? When we do that, aren't we preparing for a crisis that will be very serious some day?”**

influence that will go out from this meeting, and from questions that I have seen raised here. And unless these questions can be dealt with most diplomatically, I think we are going to have serious trouble. I surely hope the Lord will give us wisdom so that we shall know what to say and do in meeting these things in the future.

**C. L. Benson:** I have felt very much concerned along the same line; and the question that has raised itself in my own mind goes a little further than has been brought up here; but it seems to me it is almost a logical step. That is this: If there are such uncertainties with reference to our historical position, and if the Testimonies are not to be relied on to throw a great deal of light upon our historical positions, and if the same is true with reference to our theological interpretation of texts, then how can we consistently place implicit confidence in the direction that is given with reference to our educational problems, and our medical school, and even our denominational organization? If there is a

definite spiritual leadership in these things, then how can we consistently lay aside the Testimonies or partially lay them aside when it comes to the prophetic and historic side of the message? and place these things on the basis of research work? That question is in my mind, and I am confident that it is in the minds of others.

**Waldorf:** That is in my mind. That is why I brought out that illustration on the blackboard this morning, — those three rivers, history, spirit of prophecy, and the Bible.

**J. N. Anderson:** I thought when we dismissed the subject the other day the main question was how we as teachers should deal with this question when we stand before our students. I think we have come to quite a unanimous opinion about this matter among ourselves here, and we stand pretty well together, I should say, as to what position the Testimonies occupy, — their authority and their relation to the Bible, and so on, — but the question in my mind, and in the mind of some others, too, I think, is What shall we as teachers do when we stand before our classes and some historical question comes up, such as we have spoken of here, where we have decided that Sister White's writings are not final? We say there are many historical facts that we believe scholarship must decide, that Sister White never claimed to be final on the historical matters that appear in her writings. Are we safe to tell that to our students? Or shall we hold it in abeyance? And can we hold something in the back of our head that we are absolutely sure about, and that most of the brethren stand with us on? — can we hold those things back and be true to ourselves? And furthermore, are we safe in doing it? Is it well to let our people in general go on holding to the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies? When we do that, aren't we preparing for a crisis that will be very serious some day? It seems to me that the best thing for us to do is to cautiously and very carefully educate our people to see just where we really should stand to be consistent protestants, to be consistent with the Testimonies themselves, and to be consistent with what we know we must do, as intelligent men, as we have decided in these meetings.



Of course these are not such big questions, because I do not teach along this line. Still, they do sometimes arise in my classes. But personally I am not concerned about it. I *am* concerned about the faith of the young men and women that come into our schools. They are to be our leaders, and I think these are the days when they should be given the very best foundation we can give them. We should give them the most sincere and honest beliefs that we have in our own hearts.

I speak with some feeling because it does come close to my convictions that something should be done here in this place, — here is where it can be done — to safeguard our people, to educate them and to bring them back and cause them to stand upon the only foundation that can ever be secure as we advance and progress.

**C. L. Taylor:** With regard to the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies, I would say that I have heard more about it here in one day than ever before in my life. I think we have made a great big mountain of difficulty to go out and fight against. I do not believe that our people generally believe in the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies. I think that the general idea of our people is that the Testimonies are the writings of a sister who received light from God. As to verbal inspiration, I think they have a very ill-defined idea. I think they believe that in some way God gave her light, and she wrote it down, and they do not know what verbal inspiration means.

But I do see a great deal in the question Professor Benson raised, and that is if we must lay aside what Sister White has said interpreting history, or what we might call the philosophy of history, as unreliable, and also lay aside as unreliable expositions of scripture, the only natural conclusion for me, and probably for a great many others, would be that the same authorship is unreliable regarding organization, regarding pantheism, and every other subject that she ever treated on; — that she *may* have told the truth, but we had better get all the historical data we can to see whether she told the truth or not. That is something I would like to hear discussed. I do not believe we shall get to the foundation

of the question unless we answer Professor Benson's question.

**A. G. Daniells:** Shall we consider some points as settled, and pass on? Take the matter of verbal inspiration. I think it is very much as Brother Taylor says, that among the most of our people there is no question. It is not agitated. They do not understand it, and they do not understand the technical features of the inspiration of the Bible, either. And the power of the Bible and its grip on the human race does not depend on a technical point as to their belief in it, whether it is verbally inspired or truth-inspired. The men who hold directly opposite positions have the same faith in the Bible. I will not allow a man who believes in the verbal inspiration of the Bible to depreciate my faith in the Bible because I do not hold with him, — I will not consent to that a moment. I know my own faith in it, I know that I have enough faith in it to get forgiveness of my sins and companionship with my Lord and the hope of heaven. I *know* that, and a man that holds a different view need not try to depreciate my faith because I do not hold the same view that he does. I do not depreciate another man's faith or standing with God at all because he holds a different view. I think we could argue about the inspiration of the Bible — I was going to say till doomsday — till the end, and not come to the same view, but all have the same confidence in it, and have the same experience, and all get to the same place at last.

But now with reference to the Testimonies: I think more mischief can be done with the Testimonies by claiming their verbal inspiration than can with the Bible. If you ask for the logic of it, it might take some time to bring it out, and I might not be able to satisfy every mind; but if you ask for practical experience, I can give it to you, plenty of it.

**F. M. Wilcox:** Because we know how the Testimonies were brought together, and we do not know anything about the Bible.

**A. G. Daniells:** Yes, that is one point. We do know, and it is no kind of use for anybody to stand up and talk about the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies, because everybody who has ever seen the work done knows better, and we might as well dismiss it.

**M. E. Kern:** I am not so sure that some of

the brethren are right in saying that we are all agreed on this question. I came in here the other day for the first time to attend the Conference, and I would hear the same man in the same talk say that we could not depend on this historical data that was given in the spirit of prophecy, and then assert his absolute confidence in the spirit of prophecy and in the Testimonies. And then a little further along there would be something else that he would not agree with. For instance, the positive testimony against butter was mentioned, and he explained that there are exceptions to that. Later he would again say, "I have absolute confidence in the inspiration of the spirit of prophecy." The question is, What is the nature of inspiration? How can we feel, and believe and *know* that there is an inconsistency there, — something that is not right, — and yet believe that the spirit of prophecy is inspired? Do you get the question?

**A. G. Daniells:** Yes, I get your question alright!

**M. E. Kern:** That is the difficulty we have in explaining this to young people. We may have confidence ourselves, but it is hard to make others believe it if we express this more liberal view. I can see how some might take advantage of this liberal view and go out and eat meat every meal, and say that part of the Testimonies is not reliable.

**Question:** Can't he do the same thing if he believes in the verbal inspiration?

**M. E. Kern:** Not quite so consistently. If he believed every word was inspired, he could not consistently sit down and eat meat.

**A. G. Daniells:** But I have seen them do it.

**M. E. Kern:** But not conscientiously. But now take a man who delves into the Scriptures, and he reads the Hebrew and the Greek, and he goes out and tells the people, If you understood the Greek, you would not get that meaning from the Bible, or If Sister White had understood the Greek, she would not have said that. Such a man can take a lot of license from this liberal view. Now, the question is running in my mind this way: In the very nature of the case, isn't there a human element in inspiration, because God had to speak through human instruments?

And can we, either in the Bible or the Testimonies play upon a word and lay down the law and bind a man's conscience on a word instead of the general view of the whole scope of interpretation? I do not believe a man can believe in the general inspiration of the spirit of prophecy and still not believe that vegetarianism is the thing for mankind. I can understand how that testimony was written for individuals, and there are exceptions to it, and how Sister White in her human weakness could make a mistake in stating a truth, and still not destroy the inspiration of the spirit of prophecy; but the question is how to present these matters to the people. Brother Taylor may see no difficulty, but I see a lot of difficulty, not only in dealing with our students, but with our people in general.

**A. G. Daniells:** On the question of verbal inspiration?

**M. E. Kern:** Brother Benson's question is to the point. We had a council here a few weeks ago, and we laid down pretty straight some principles of education, and also some technicalities of education, and we based our conclusions on the authority of the spirit of prophecy, as it was written. Now we come to those historical questions, and we say, "Well, Sister White was mistaken about that, and that needs to be revised." The individual who did not quite see the points that we made at the educational council may say, "Well, possibly Sister White is wrong about the influence of universities," and it is hard to convince him that she was right, perhaps. I want, somehow, to get on a consistent basis myself.

Many years ago I was in a meeting where Dr. Kellogg and others were considering a business matter. Dr. Kellogg there took a position exactly contrary to something Sister White had said. When asked how he explained what she had said, he replied that she had been influenced to say it. He was running down the Testimonies there. A short time after that I read one of his articles in the paper, in which he was laying down the law on the basis of the Testimonies. That made me lose my confidence in Dr. Kellogg. On one point that he did not agree with, he said she had been influenced. Then he took this other thing that pleased him and he said it was from

the Lord. Perhaps he thought one was from the Lord and the other was not. But we certainly do have difficulty in showing the people which is human and which is divinely inspired.

**G. B. Thompson:** Wouldn't that be true of the Bible?

**M. E. Kern:** That is why I propose that we discuss the nature of inspiration. I have a

**“What is the nature of inspiration? How can we feel, and believe and *know* that there is an inconsistency there . . . and yet believe that the spirit of prophecy is inspired?”**

sort of feeling that Sister White was a prophet just as Jeremiah was, and that in time her work will show up like Jeremiah's. I wonder if Jeremiah, in his day, did not do a lot of talking and perhaps some writing which was, as Paul said, on his own authority. I wonder if, in those days, the people did not have difficulty in differentiating between what was from the Lord and what was not. But the people make it more difficult now because all of Sister White's articles and books are with us, and her letters, too, and many think that every word she has ever said or written is from the Lord. We have had sanitariums built on account of letters she has written from a depot somewhere. And undertakings involving great financial investments have been started because of a letter from her. There is no question but what many young people, and also ministers, have that idea, and it is a real problem with me. I wish we could get down to bedrock. I do not think we are there yet.

**W. W. Prescott:** I would like to ask if you think that, after his writings had been published a series of years, Jeremiah changed them because he was convinced that there were historical errors in them?

**M. E. Kern:** I can not answer that.

**W. H. Wakeham:** There is a real difficulty, and we will have it to meet. We may say

that the people do not believe in the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies. Perhaps technically they do not know what it means. But that is not the question at all. They have accepted the Testimonies all over the country, and believe that every identical word that Sister White has written was to be received as infallible truth. We have that thing to meet when we get back, and it will be brought up in our classes just as sure as we stand here, because it has come to me over and over again in every class I have taught. It not only comes out in classes, but in the churches. I know we have a very delicate task before us if we meet the situation and do it in the way the Lord wants it done. I am praying very earnestly for help as I go back to meet some of the things I know I am going to meet.

**W. E. Howell:** Surely we are getting our difficulties aired well this morning, and that is perfectly proper; but we have only ten minutes left of the period in which to give some attention to the solution of those difficulties. We have invited men of much larger experience than we are to come in and help us and give us their counsel. It seems to me we ought to give them some time.

**G. B. Thompson:** It seems to me that if we are going to preach the Testimonies and establish confidence in them, it does not depend on whether they are verbally inspired or not. I think we are in this fix because of a wrong education that our people have had. [Voice: That is true.] If we had always taught the truth on this question, we would not have any trouble or shock in the denomination now. But the shock is because we have not taught the truth, and have put the Testimonies on a plane where she says they do not stand. We have claimed more for them than she did. My thought is this, that the evidence of the inspiration of the Testimonies is not in their verbal inspiration, but in their influence and power in the denomination. Now to illustrate: Brother Daniells and I were in Battle Creek at a special crisis, and word came to us that some special testimonies were on the way to us from Sister White, and for us to stay there until they came. When they came we found they were

to be read to the people. They were of a very serious character. They had been written a year before and filed away. Brother Daniells and I prayed about it, and then we sent out the word to the people that a meeting was to be held at a certain time. When the time came, about 3,000 people came into the Tabernacle, and they filled it up, even away back up into the "peanut gallery." There were unbelievers and skeptics there, and all classes. Brother Daniells stood up there and read that matter to them, and I tell you there was a power went with it that gripped that whole congregation. And after the meeting was over, people came to us and told us that the Testimony described a meeting they had held the night before. I was convinced that there was more than ordinary power in that document. It was not whether it was verbally inspired or not, but it carried the power of the Spirit of God with it.

I think if we could get at it from that line, we would get along better. They are not verbally inspired, — we know that, — and what is the use of teaching that they are?

**M. E. Kern:** I would like to suggest that this question of verbal inspiration does not settle the difficulty.

**C. M. Sorenson:** Does Sister White use the word "inspiration" concerning her own writings, or is that merely a theory we have worked up ourselves? I ask for information? I have never seen that in her writings.

**A. G. Daniells:** I hardly know where to begin or what to say. I think I must repeat this, that our difficulty lies in two points, especially. One is on infallibility and the other is on verbal inspiration. I think Brother James White foresaw difficulties along this line away back at the beginning. He knew that he took Sister White's testimonies and helped to write them out and make them clear and grammatical and plain. He knew that he was doing that right along. And he knew that the secretaries they employed took them and put them into grammatical condition, transposed sentences, completed sentences, and used words that Sister White did not herself write in her original copy. He saw that, and yet he saw some brethren who did not know this, and who had great confidence in the Testimonies, just believing and teach-

ing that these words were given to Sister White as well as the thought. And he tried to correct that idea. You will find those statements in the *Review and Herald*, like the one Brother Wilcox read the other day. If that explanation had been accepted and passed on down, we would have been free from a great many perplexities that we have now.

**F. M. Wilcox:** Articles were published in those early *Reviews* disclaiming that.

**A. G. Daniells:** Yes, but you know there are some brethren who go in all over. We could mention some old and some young who think they cannot believe the Testimonies without just putting them up as absolutely infallible and word-inspired, taking the whole thing as given verbally by the Lord. They do not see how to believe them and how to get good out of them except in that way; and I suppose some people would feel that if they did not believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, they could not have confidence in it, and take it as the great Book that they now see it to be. Some men are technical, and can hardly understand it in any other way. Some other men are not so technical in logic, but they have great faith and great confidence, and so they can go through on another line of thought. I am sure there has been advocated an idea of infallibility in Sister White and verbal inspiration in the Testimonies that has led people to expect too much and to make too great claims, and so we have gotten into difficulty.

Now, as I have studied it these years since I was thrown into the controversy at Battle Creek, I have endeavored to ascertain the truth and then be true to the truth. I do not know how to do except that way. It will never help me, or help the people, to make a false claim to evade some trouble. I know we have difficulties here, but let us dispose of some of the main things first. Brethren, are we going to evade difficulties or help out the difficulties by taking a false position? [Voices: No!] Well, then let us take an honest, true position, and reach our end somehow, because I never will put up a false claim to evade something that will come up a little later on.

That is not honest and it is not Christian, and so I take my stand there.

In Australia I saw "The Desire of Ages" being made up, and I saw the rewriting of chapters, some of them written over and over and over again. I saw that, and when I talked with Sister Davis about it, I tell you I had to square up to this thing and begin to settle things about the spirit of prophecy. If these false positions had never been taken, the thing would be much plainer than it is today. What was charged as plagiarism would all have been simplified, and I believe men would have been saved to the cause if from the start we had understood this thing as it should have been. With those false views held, we face difficulties in straightening up. We will not meet those difficulties by resorting to a false claim. We could meet them just

**"In Australia I saw 'The Desire of Ages' being made up, and I saw the rewriting of chapters, some of them written over and over and over again."**

for today by saying, "Brethren, I believe in the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies; I believe in the infallibility of the one through whom they came, and everything that is written there I will take and I will stand on that against all comers."

If we did that, I would just take everything from A to Z, exactly as it was written, without making any explanations to any one; and I would not eat butter or salt or eggs if I believed that the Lord gave the words in those Testimonies to Sister White for the whole body of people in this world. But I do not believe it.

**M. E. Kern:** You couldn't and keep your conscience clear.

**A. G. Daniells:** No, I couldn't; but I do not believe that; and I can enter upon an explanation of health reform that I think is consistent, and that she endeavored to bring in in later years when she saw people making

a bad use of that. I have eaten pounds of butter at her table myself, and dozens of eggs. I could not explain that in her own family if I believed that she believed those were the Lord's own words to the world. But there are people who believe that and do not eat eggs or butter. I do not know that they use salt. I know plenty of people in the early days did not use salt, and it was in our church. I am sure that many children suffered from it.

There is no use of our claiming anything more on the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies, because she never claimed it, and James White never claimed it, and W. C. White never claimed it; and all the persons who helped to prepare those Testimonies knew they were not verbally inspired. I will say no more along that line.

**D. A. Parsons:** She not only did not claim it, but she denied it.

**A. G. Daniells:** Yes, she tried to correct the people.

Now on infallibility. I suppose Sister White used Paul's text, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," as much as any other scripture. She used to repeat that often, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," with the idea that she was a poor, feeble woman, a messenger of the Lord trying to do her duty and meet the mind of God in this work. When you take the position that she was not infallible, and that her writings were not verbally inspired, isn't there a chance for the manifestation of the human? If there isn't, then what is infallibility? And should we be surprised when we know that the instrument was fallible, and that the general truths, as she says, were revealed, then aren't we prepared to see mistakes?

**M. E. Kern:** She was an author and not merely a pen.

**A. G. Daniells:** Yes; and now take that "Life of Paul," — I suppose you all know about it and knew what claims were put up against her, charges made of plagiarism, even by the authors of the book, Conybeare and Howson, and were liable to make the denomination trouble because there was so much of their book put into "The Life of Paul" without any credit or quotation marks. Some people of strict logic might fly the

track on that ground, but I am not built that way. I found it out, and I read it with Brother Palmer when he found it, and we got Conybeare and Howson, and we got Wylie's "History of the Reformation," and we read word for word, page after page, and no quotations, no credit, and really I did not know the difference until I began to compare them. I supposed it was Sister White's own work. The poor sister said, "Why, I didn't know about quotations and credits. My secretary should have looked after that, and the publishing house should have looked after it."

She did not claim that that was all revealed to her and written word for word under the inspiration of the Lord. There I saw the manifestation of the human in these writings. Of course I could have said this, and I did say it, that I wished a different course had been taken in the compilation of the books. If proper care had been exercised, it would have saved a lot of people from being thrown off the track.

**Mrs. Williams:** The secretary would know that she ought not to quote a thing without using quotation marks.

**A. G. Daniells:** You would think so. I do not know who the secretary was. The book was set aside, and I have never learned who had a hand in fixing that up. It may be that some do know.

**B. L. House:** May I ask one question about that book? Did Sister White write any of it?

**A. G. Daniells:** O, yes!

**E. L. House:** But there are some things that are not in Conybeare and Howson that are not in the new book, either. Why are those striking statements not embodied in the new book?

**A. G. Daniells:** I cannot tell you. But if her writings were verbally inspired, why should she revise them?

**B. L. House:** My difficulty is not with the verbal inspiration. My difficulty is here: You take the nine volumes of the Testimonies, and as I understand it, Sister White wrote the original matter from which they were made up, except that they were corrected so far as grammar, capitalization and

punctuation are concerned. But such books as "Sketches of the Life of Paul," "Desire of Ages," and "Great Controversy," were composed differently, it seems to me, even by her secretaries than the nine volumes of the Testimonies. Is there not a difference? I have felt that the Testimonies were not produced like those other books.

**A. G. Daniells:** I do not know how much revision she might have made in those personal Testimonies before she put them out.

**B. L. House:** Did any one else ever write anything that is found in the nine volumes of the Testimonies?

**A. G. Daniells:** No, I do not know that there are any quotations in the Testimonies.

**B. L. House:** Isn't there a difference, then, between the nine volumes of the Testimonies and those other books for which her sec-

**"I wished a different course had been taken in the compilation of the books. If proper care had been exercised, it would have saved a lot of people from being thrown off the track."**

retaries were authorized to collect valuable quotations from other books?

**A. G. Daniells:** You admit that she had the right to revise her work?

**B. L. House:** O, Yes.

**A. G. Daniells:** Then your question is, Why did she leave out of the revision some striking things that she wrote that it seems should have been put in?

**B. L. House:** Yes.

**M. E. Kern:** In the first volume of the spirit of prophecy there are some details given, if I am not mistaken, as to the height of Adam. It seems to me that when she went to prepare "Patriarchs and Prophets" for the public, even though that had been shown her, it did not seem wise to put that before the public.

**A. G. Daniells:** And she also left out of our books for the public that scene of Satan playing the game of life.

**B. L. House:** In that old edition of



"Sketches of the Life of Paul," she is very clear about the ceremonial law. That is not in the new book, and I wondered why that was left out.

**D. A. Parsons:** I have an answer to that. I was in California when the book was compiled, and I took the old edition and talked with Brother Will White about this very question. He said the whole book, with the exception of that chapter, had been compiled for some time, and they had held it up until they could arrange that chapter in such a way as to prevent controversy arising. They did not desire the book to be used to settle any controversy, and therefore they eliminated most of these statements on the ceremonial law just to prevent a renewal of the great controversy over the ceremonial law in Galatians.

**B. L. House:** It is not a repudiation of what was written by her in the first volume, is it?

**D. A. Parsons:** No, not at all; but they just put enough in to satisfy the inquiring mind, but eliminated those striking statements to prevent a renewal of the controversy.

**F. M. Wilcox:** I would like to ask, Brother Daniells, if it could be accepted as a sort of rule that Sister White might be mistaken in details, but in the general policy and instruction she was an authority. For instance, I hear a man saying, I can not accept Sister White on this, when perhaps she has devoted pages to the discussion of it. A man said he could not accept what Sister White said about royalties on books, and yet she devotes pages to that subject, and emphasizes it again and again; and it is the same with policies for our schools and publishing houses and sanitariums. It seems to me I would have to accept what she says on some of those general policies or I would have to sweep away the whole thing. Either the Lord has spoken through her or He has not spoken through her; and if it is a matter of deciding in my own judgment whether He has or has not, then I regard her books the same as every other book published. I think it is one thing for a man to stultify his conscience, and it is another thing to stultify his judgment. It is one thing for me to lay aside my conscience, and it is another

thing for me to change my judgment over some views that I hold.

**A. G. Daniells:** I think Brother Benson's question on historical and theological matters has not been dealt with yet, and I do not know that I am able to give any light. Perhaps some of you may know to what extent Sister White has revised some of her statements and references or quotations from historical writings. Have you ever gone through and made a list of them?

**W. W. Prescott:** I gave nearly an hour to that the other day, taking the old edition of "Great Controversy" and reading it and then reading the revised edition. But that did not cover all the ground.

**A. G. Daniells:** We did not create that difficulty, did we? We General Conference men did not create it, for we did not make the revision. We did not take any part in it. We had nothing whatever to do with it. It was all done under her supervision. If there is a difficulty there, she created it, did she not?

**F. M. Wilcox:** She assumed the whole responsibility for it.

**M. F. Kern.** But we have to meet it.

**A. G. Daniells:** Well, now, which statement shall we take, the original or the revised?

**B. L. House:** My real difficulty is just here: Sister White did not write either the old edition or the revised, as I understand it.

**A. G. Daniells:** What do you mean by saying that she did not write either edition?

**B. L. House:** As I understand it, Elder J. N. Anderson prepared those historical quotations for the old edition, and Brother Robinson and Brother Crisler, Professor Prescott and others furnished the quotations for the new edition. Did she write the historical quotations in there?

**A. G. Daniells:** No.

**B. L. House:** Then there is a difference between the Testimonies and those books.

**W. W. Prescott:** Changes have been made in what was not historical extract at all.

**A. G. Daniells:** Shall we not confine ourselves just now to this question of Brother Benson's and lead our way up to the real difficulty, and then deal with it? Do you have



a clear conception of the way the difficulty arose? — that in making the first edition of “Great Controversy” those who helped her prepare the copy were allowed to bring forward historical quotations that seemed to fit the case. She may have asked, “Now, what good history do you have for that?” I do not know just how she brought it in, but she never would allow us to claim anything for her as a historian. She did not put herself up as a corrector of history, — not only did not do that, but protested against it. Just how they dealt in bringing the history along, I could not say, but I suspect that she referred to this as she went along, and then allowed

**“Before ‘Great Controversy’ was revised, I was unorthodox on a certain point, but after it was revised, I was perfectly orthodox.”**

them to gather the very best historical statements they could and submit them to her, and she approved of them.

**C. L. Benson:** This is my query, and it underlies all of her writings: How did she determine upon the philosophy of history? If she endorsed our interpretation of history, without any details, do we dare to set that aside? I understand she never studied medical science; but she has laid down certain fundamental principles; and that she has done the same with education and organization.

**A. G. Daniells:** Sister White never has written anything on the philosophy of history.

**C. L. Benson:** No, but she has endorsed our 2300 day proposition, from 538 to 1798.

**A. G. Daniells:** You understand she did that by placing that in her writings?

**C. L. Benson:** Yes.

**A. G. Daniells:** Yes, I suppose she did.

**C. A. Shull:** I think the book “Education” contains something along the line of the philosophy of history.

**W. E. Howell:** Yes, she outlines general principles.

**C. M. Sorenson:** Nobody has ever questioned Sister White’s philosophy of history, so far as I know, — and I presume I have heard most of the questions raised about it, — along the line of the hand of God in human affairs and the way the hand of God has been manifested. The only question anybody has raised has been about minor details. Take this question as to whether 533 has some significance taken in connection with 538. She never set 533, but if there is a significance attached to it in human affairs, it certainly would not shut us out from using it, and that would not affect the 1260 years. Some people say antichrist is yet to come, and is to last for three and one-half literal years. If you change those positions, you will change the philosophy.

**W. W. Prescott:** Do I understand Brother Benson’s view is that such a statement as that in “Great Controversy,” that the 1260 years began in 538 and ended in 1798, settles the matter infallibly?

**C. L. Benson:** No, only on the preaching of doctrines in general. If she endorses the prophetic part of our interpretation, irrespective of details, then she endorses it.

**W. W. Prescott:** Then that settles it as being a part of that philosophy.

**C. L. Benson:** Yes, in this way: I do not see how we can do anything else but set up our individual judgment if we say we will discount that, because we have something else that we think is better evidence. It is the same with education and the medical science.

**W. W. Prescott:** You are touching exactly the experience through which I went, personally, because you all know that I contributed something toward the revision of “Great Controversy.” I furnished considerable material bearing upon that question.

**A. G. Daniells:** By request.

**W. W. Prescott:** Yes, I was asked to do it, and at first I said, “No, I will not do it. I know what it means.” But I was urged into it. When I had gone over it with W. C. White, then I said, “Here is my difficulty. I have gone over this and suggested changes that ought to be made in order to correct statements. These changes have been accepted. My personal difficulty will be to retain faith on those things that I can not deal

with on that basis." But I did not throw up the spirit of prophecy, and have not yet; but I have had to adjust my view of things. I will say to you, as a matter of fact, that the relation of those writings to this movement and to our work, is clearer and more consistent in my mind than it was then. But still you know what I am charged with. I have gone through the personal experience myself over that very thing that you speak of. If we correct it here and correct it there, how are we going to stand with it in the other places?

**F. M. Wilcox:** Those things do not involve the general philosophy of the book.

**W. W. Prescott:** No, but they did involve quite large details. For instance, before "Great Controversy" was revised, I was unorthodox on a certain point, but after it was revised, I was perfectly orthodox.

**C. M. Sorenson:** On what point?

**W. W. Prescott:** My interpretation was, (and I taught it for years in *The Protestant Magazine*) that Babylon stood for the great apostasy against God, which headed up in the papacy, but which included all minor forms, and that before we come to the end, they would all come under one. That was not the teaching of "Great Controversy." "Great Controversy" said that Babylon could not mean the romish church, and I had made it mean that largely and primarily. After the book was revised, although the whole argument remained the same, it said that it could not mean the Roman Church *alone*, just that one word added.

**F. M. Wilcox:** That helped you out.

**W. W. Prescott:** Yes, but I told W. C.

White I did not think anybody had any right to do that. And I did not believe anybody had any right to use it against me before or afterward. I simply went right on with my teaching.

**J. W. Anderson:** Would you not claim other portions of the book as on the same basis?

**W. W. Prescott:** No, I would refuse to do that. I had to deal with A. R. Henry over that question. He was determined to crush those men that took a wrong course concerning him. I spent hours with that man trying to

help him. We were intimate in our work, and I used to go to his house and spend hours with him. He brought up this question about the authority of the spirit of prophecy and wanted me to draw the line between what was authoritative and what was not. I said, "Brother Henry, I will not attempt to do it, and I advise you not to do it. There is an authority in that gift here, and we must recognize it."

I have tried to maintain personal confidence in this gift in the church, and I use it and use it. I have gotten great help from those books, but I will tell you frankly that I held to that position on the question of Babylon for years when I knew it was exactly contrary to "Great Controversy," but I went on, and in due time I became orthodox. I did not enjoy that experience at all, and I hope you will not have to go through it. It means something.

**C. L. Benson:** That is the pivotal point. You had something that enabled you to take that position. What was it?

**W. W. Prescott:** I can not lay down any rule for anybody. What settled me to take that position was the Bible, not any secular authority.

**J. N. Anderson:** Your own findings must be your authority for believing and not believing.

**W. W. Prescott:** You can upset everything by applying that as a general principle.

**C. P. Bollman:** Could you tell, in just a few words, how the Bible helped you?

**W. W. Prescott:** That would involve the whole question of the beast.

**Voice:** To your knowledge, has Sister White ever made a difference between her nine volumes and her other books?

**W. W. Prescott:** I have never talked with her about it. In my mind, there is a difference between the works she largely prepared herself and what was prepared by others for sale to the public.

**A. G. Daniells:** You might as well state that a little fuller, the difference in the way they were produced.

**W. W. Prescott:** If I should speak my mind frankly, I should say that I have felt for years that great mistakes were made in handling her writings for commercial purposes.

**C. M. Sorenson:** By whom?

**W. W. Prescott:** I do not want to charge anybody. But I do think great mistakes were made in that way. That is why I have made a distinction as I have. When I talked with W. C. White about it (and I do not know that he is an infallible authority), he told me frankly that when they got out "Great Controversy," if they did not find in her writings anything on certain chapters to make the historical connections, they took other books, like "Daniel and the Revelation," and used portions of them; and sometimes her secretaries, and sometimes she herself, would prepare a chapter that would fill the gap.

**C. A. Shull:** I would like to ask if Brother Prescott wishes to be understood that his attitude is that wherever his own judgment comes in conflict with any statement in the spirit of prophecy, he will follow his judgment rather than the spirit of prophecy?

**W. W. Prescott:** No, I do not want anybody to get that understanding. That is the very understanding that I do not want anybody to get.

**C. A. Shull:** Then that was an exceptional case?

**W. W. Prescott:** Yes, I was forced to that from my study of the Bible. When I made up my mind to that, I did not parade it before the people and say, "Here is a mistake in 'Great Controversy,' and if you study the Bible you will find it to be so." I did not attack the spirit of prophecy. My attitude has been to avoid anything like opposition to the gift in this church, but I avoid such a misuse of it as to set aside the Bible. I do not want anybody to think for a moment that I set up my judgment against the spirit of prophecy.

**A. G. Daniells:** Let us remember that, brethren, and not say a word that will misrepresent Brother Prescott.

**B. L. House:** Did Sister White herself write that statement that the term Babylon could not apply to the Catholic Church, or was that copied from some other author?

**W. W. Prescott:** That was in the written statement.

**B. L. House:** Has she ever changed any of the nine volumes of the Testimonies?

**W. W. Prescott:** "Great Controversy" is the only book I know of that has been revised.

**C. M. Sorenson:** Hasn't "Early Writings" been revised? I understand some omissions have been made in the later editions.

**W. W. Prescott:** Perhaps some things have been left out, but I do not think the writing itself has been revised.

**A. G. Daniells:** You know there is a statement that the pope changed the Sabbath, and another one, that the papacy was abolished. What do you do with those?

**B. L. House:** There is no trouble with that.

**A. G. Daniells:** Why not? The pope did not change the Sabbath?

**H. L. House:** But the pope stands for the papacy.

**A. G. Daniells:** There are people that just believe there was a certain pope that changed the Sabbath, because of the way they follow the words. She never meant to say that a certain pope changed the Sabbath; but do you know, I have had that brought up to me a hundred times in ministers' meetings.

**B. L. House:** I have never had any trouble on that.

**A. G. Daniells:** But you are only one. There are about 2,000 others. I have had to work with men just gradually and carefully and all the time keep from giving out the idea that I was a doubter of the Testimonies.

I know it is reported around that some of us men here at Washington, in charge of the general administrative work, are very shaky and unbelieving, but I want to tell you that I know better. I know that my associates have confidence right down on the solid platform of this whole question; and I know that if many of you had gone at this thing and experienced what we have, you would have passed through an experience that would have given you solid ground. You would have shaken a bit, and you are beginning to shake now, and some of you do not know where you are going to land. These questions show it. But that is not to say there is not a foundation. It is to say that you have not gone through the toils yet and got your feet on solid ground.

I want to make this suggestion, because with all these questions we can not follow

one line of thought logically: We must use good sense in dealing with this whole question, brethren. Do not be careless with your words. Do not be careless in reporting or representing men's views. I have had this thing to deal with for years and years, as you know, in every ministers' meeting; and I have been called into college classes over and over again, and have had to say things that those ministers and students never heard before about this; and I have prayed for wisdom and for the Spirit of the Lord to direct them and to give faith and to cover up those things that would leave doubt. And I have never had it come back on me that a careful, cautious statement made in the fear of God has upset a single person. It may have done it, but it has never come back to me. You take our ministers: This brother [meaning Brother Waldorf] knows how much this was brought up in our ministers' meetings over in Australia, and we dealt with it plainly. We did not try to pull the wool over the people's eyes, and I believe you will find the Australian preachers and churches as firm believers in the spirit of prophecy and in Sister White's call by the Lord as you will find any place on the face of the earth. Take New Zealand: I brought them up there, and I think it is well known that there is not a place in the world where the people stand truer to this gift than they do there.

I do not believe it is necessary to dissemble a bit, but I do believe, brethren, that we have got to use wisdom that God alone can give us in dealing with this until matters gradually work over. We have made a wonderful change in nineteen years, Brother Prescott. Fifteen years ago we could not have talked what we are talking here today. It would not

have been safe. This matter has come along gradually, and yet people are not losing their confidence in the gift. Last year we sold 5,000 sets of the Testimonies, and they cost eight or nine dollars a set. In one year our brethren and sisters, under the influence of the General Conference, and the union conference and local conference men and our preachers, — under their influence, without any compulsion, our brethren came along and spent forty or fifty thousand dollars for the Testimonies. What would you consider that an indication of?

**Voice:** Confidence.

**A. G. Daniells:** Yes, confidence, and a friendly attitude. They did not buy them as critics to tear them to pieces. We must be judged by our fruits. I want to tell you that the clearer view we get on the exact facts in the case, the stronger the position of our people will be in the whole thing.

Now, Brother Benson, I see the whole line running through there that you referred to. We can not correct that in a day. We must use great judgment and caution. I hope you Bible teachers will be exceedingly careful. I was called up here twice to speak on the spirit of prophecy to the Bible and pastoral training classes. They brought up this question of history. I simply said, "Now, boys, Sister White never claimed to be a historian nor a corrector of history. She used the best she knew for the matter she was writing on." I have never heard from a teacher that those boys buzzed around them and said, "Brother Daniells does not believe Sister White's writings are reliable." I believe the Lord will help us to take care of this if we will be careful and use good sense. I think that is all I can say in this sort of discussion.

# ABC Theology

Review by Wayne Judd

*The Demons Have Had It: A Theological ABC*  
by Charles Scriven  
Southern Publishing Association, 125 pp.,  
\$3.95.

**T***he Demons Have Had* It is Charles Scriven's *Mere Christianity*. His themes are revelation, inspiration, law, repentance, conversion, sanctification, election, judgment and resurrection. In footnotes to his ten chapters, he includes Macquarrie, Barth, Niebuhr, Pascal, Gilkey, Kierkegaard, Tillich, Bonhoeffer and many others. He uses 89 Bible references and two Ellen White comments, suggesting that he takes Mrs. White's *sola scriptura* stance seriously. To squeeze all this into 125 pages is a hazardous undertaking, which Scriven acknowledges: "I have written a very short book about Christianity. It is not a complete account, only a beginning of sorts — a cup of water, not the reservoir. I intend simply that my readers taste what (as far as I can tell) Christian faith really is, instead of what popular caricatures make it out to be. I want to show what it means for our existence now — to say, among other things, that it is indeed not 'just another form of giving up the present for some goal' " (p. 14).

Little need be written about Chuck Scriven's style. He does not know how to be drab. His large ideas are easy to read. Even his weaker concepts and traditional notions are well dressed. He does not pretend to

develop a system, though perhaps he will (and should) if members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church continue to show a growing interest in theology.

Because his work is fresh, it deserves to be read with a critical eye. His conversational, first-person approach invites congenial disagreement. (This attitude is enhanced by his introductory bow to three "where-are-they-now" scholars, Roy Branson, Edward Vick and Harold Weiss.) Obviously, Scriven has learned that to do theology, one must listen as well as talk.

The author has sought out questions for which easy answers are not readily available. Is God a psychological myth? Why do some fortunate ones know Him while others do not? What is man? What is sin? What does love require? What does it mean to overcome sin in the life? Is there a cure for evil, or does God "just forgive us of it when it happens?" (p. 89). Why take the Sabbath seriously? Does life have ultimate meaning?

While Scriven's answers to these questions do not always take us to the frontiers of contemporary theology, he does take us where the majority of Seventh-day Adventist have never been before, and in this, he fulfills his priestly objective to be a "middleman" between scholars and nonscholars (p. 10).

Still, some readers may object to some of his positions. For example, his doctrine of man hints at a rejection of reformation orthodoxy. What he says is not as significant as what he does not say. He refuses to declare that man is incapable of the good, saying instead that the good has never been "easy" for us (p. 40). While his strong social orienta-

Wayne Judd, who teaches theology at Pacific Union College, is studying for his doctorate in American church history at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley.

tion, which derives from love, is clearly supportable by Scripture, his reluctance to declare man depraved is not.

Someone will also ask why, in reference to language about God, "the most serious question, perhaps, arises from the practice of referring to God in the masculine gender" (p. 23). Scriven borrows a concept from Emil Brunner to clarify: "God is always more than any human language—whether words or sculpture or painting—can ever express. God is God — not one *thing* among other things. God is only Himself, and human language can never perfectly represent Him" (p. 25; cf. Brunner, *Our Faith*, pp. 1, 2).

He will probably be challenged by extremists on both ends of the sanctification continuum, since he refuses either to demand perfection or to insist on hopeless and continuing sinfulness. His delightful vacillation on the issue suggests that he is really aware of the ultimate practical irrelevance of the whole matter, since, of course, the issue of the perfectly sanctified person is humanly unanswerable and immeasurable.

Chapter six, "Christian Morals: A New Kind of Loving," is at once a chapter of strength and weakness, strong because of his superb definition of *agape* love (though, in fact, New Testament love is not new at all), and weak because of his ethical application of this love. In definition, he declares, "*Agape* means, quite simply, a concern for your neighbor whether he is attractive or not. . . . It is a love that takes the initiative. . . . Going into the world, sacrificing for it, even dying for it — this is what the gospel demands. . . . If you (or your company or government) operate purely from the standpoint of your own advantage — loving only when love is safe and pleasant — no real risks are taken and no genuinely new achievements of brotherhood can occur" (pp. 69-71).

In his ethical development of this great principle, Scriven cites the involvement of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the plot against Hitler — a plot to murder. While Bonhoeffer was hardly one to break the commandment protecting human life, the circumstances demanded a higher ethic than the one that says, "Thou shalt not kill." Scriven appropriately defends Bonhoeffer's choice, based on the

*agape* ethic, since "only love has ultimate authority" (p. 76). He continues, "Fortunately, he could turn to the law of love and make it the final arbiter — the head umpire, we might say — in the process of moral decision. *Agape* asked him to take the initiative for others and not to retreat from reality" (p. 77). Then, suddenly, in a bizarre twist of the pen, he writes, "But let's make one thing clear, too. If the resistance in Germany had successfully assassinated Hitler, it would very certainly have been a tragedy. For Hitler was faced with struggles and hopes and disappointments as important to him as ours are to us. He, too, was a person of worth and possibility. Had he been assassinated, it would have nullified, cruelly and suddenly, his potential for change, repentance and growth" (p. 77). His point is to show that even though the law of love is ultimate, "some pain, some evil, will result" when any law is broken (p. 77).

Measured against contemporary theology, *The Demons Have Had It*, is a tame, conservative effort. But compared to other books published by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it will sound like a new voice. Which raises two questions: Who is the book for, and what is the future of theology in the Church?

The book should be read by busy pastors and probing lay people. It should be on the reading lists for college religion classes. The book speaks primarily to those who are already residents in the household of faith, though it certainly does not exclude the non-Seventh-day Adventist reader. Indeed, expanded marketing efforts for denominational publications could make this volume accessible to all thoughtful Christians.

And what of theology's future in Adventism? Clearly, the Church's laity reveals a growing interest in theology. Unfortunately, this interest focuses more on the often careless theology contained on cassette tapes than it does on worthwhile books. Perhaps this trend will reverse, and the reluctance of the church to plow new theological topsoil will gradually yield to the sometimes forsaken truth that truth is progressive.

# Responses from Readers

## On Paxton

To the Editors: "Lightning continues to dart and play about Geoffrey Paxton's *The Shaking of Adventism*," I wrote the PREXAD members of the General Conference following Paxton's speaking tour across Adventist America. The stimulus for my missive to leadership was a position letter initiated in the President's Committee and mailed, over the North American Division president's signature, to each of the North American union presidents, requesting them to dissuade their institutional leaders from allowing Paxton to realize his desire "to speak in a good many Adventist centers."

Leadership's letter continued: "Tuesday, March 14, we discussed this situation in PREXAD. . . We do not feel that it would be wise to overreact, because at this point we do not feel at all threatened and should in no way indicate any panic."

"As you know, Mr. Paxton is not a Seventh-day Adventist. He does not have the interest of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at heart. There is little or nothing that he may do or say that will build the spiritual strength of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is evident from the way he has approached the writing of his book and the interviews he has had that the book is designed to embarrass and divide the church."

What is embarrassing is that *Time* and the Religious News Service received copies of the letter, presumably from some Adventist "deep throat." It is difficult to decide whom to be more disappointed in, the "deep throat" or the architects of a letter, the

mind-set of which is the sectarian equivalent of Archie Bunker.

The polite disappointment I registered, by letter, to leadership, was my concern that they had begun to look on the heart in presuming to know the motives of Geoffrey Paxton. I was not attempting to defend his theology.

Shortly before closing, leadership wrote reassuringly to its highly positioned subordinates: "I should also let you know that a scholarly critique of Mr. Paxton's book is being prepared so that our pastors and leaders and others will have some way of evaluating the content of his book and giving direction in connection with this matter."

The question which leaps to mind is, "If 'our pastors and leaders and others' cannot read and evaluate the book themselves, how will they make any sense of a scholarly critique?" I dunno.

Only time will reveal whether Paxton has ulterior motives. But his repudiation of the common dismissal of Adventists as a cult, or non-Christian sect, is heartening: "No, whatever we think of this or that Adventist 'distinctive,' we have to recognize the movement as being Christian."

The appearance of Paxton and his book and the response of leadership is an indication of the tendency for Adventist leadership to politicize theology. The intentional separation of King and Priesthood in ancient Israel should warn us of the compromising dangers in the incestuous mixing of theology and polity. So far, for good or ill, this politicizing has had the unintended effect of advertising books and broadcasting viewpoints that would not otherwise have had nearly the



hearing. It is fitting, in view of the nationality of the personality under discussion, to say that it boomeranged. The Adventist concerned for the free play of ideas understands that this result, over the long haul, will provide heuristic dividends.

Meditating on the theological and political struggle over Righteousness by Faith, the lapidary thought occurs that we who consider ourselves a prophetic — and prophetically anticipated — people could fail to fill our end-time role as certainly as did the Children of Israel, and with all the attendant ignominy. Good SDA hermeneutic demands the possibility: All prophecy is conditional.

Words cross over the nervous question of assurance. What is the mechanism of salvation? Are we saved by justification alone? Or by justification and sanctification? Do they occur together? Does imparted righteousness gradually replace imputed righteousness?

A proper concern for personal salvation inspires the individual desiring assurance of a place in the Kingdom to request a direct and clear answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" In the current discussion, seemingly contradictory responses are provided. Faced with incompatible statements, all given with solemn authority and spiritual fervor, the typical churchgoer isn't sure really whether to breathe or swallow.

A national magazine editor remarked, on hearing that \$600,000 had been allocated to gather in seclusion for one year twelve of America's leading secular philosophers at Santa Barbara just to think about thinking, that the expenditure of \$50,000 odd per year apiece towards the withdrawal from public life of the average modern philosopher was a price America could ill afford not to pay. I am reminded, similarly, of the continuing plethora of denominationally sponsored conferences on Righteousness by Faith.

Unfortunately, when SDA theologians espousing tangential opinions do meet for discussion, it is at the request of leadership whose overriding concern is for a united front, the desire to procrusteanize diverging views into a cozy bed of consensus. This attempt to arrive at theological consensus,

rationality, via committee, is an effort to make theology (to borrow professor Oakshott's phrase) "as the crow flies," an enterprise largely foredoomed.

The freedoms the church desires to have in the world, which are elaborated continually in *Liberty*, should the more surely be exemplified within the church body and its commitment to the knowing of truth and the freedom to pursue it. To paraphrase Jefferson in his first inaugural address: "If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this church or to change its spiritual form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where the Spirit reigns free to combat it."

If we cannot look for freedom here in the Body of Christ, we need not look for it long from the world. This entire cosmic controversy continues, as we understand it, over the issue of freedom — God's desiring a universe that runs smoothly, happily, but freely. And what unthinkable lengths He has been willing to go, to maintain that freedom.

Those who had the opportunity to hear Paxton speak in several locations discovered that the pre-eschaton, unquickened Paxton was a bit of a chameleon. In Loma Linda, when queried about the theology (regarding the atonement) contained in the 1978 missionary book, *Can God Be Trusted?* he said that he believed what it said but also more, and had words of approbation for the character of the author and others who teach that position.

But we follow Paxton from Loma Linda to Portland and see his colors change. What he had described as "a fairly unsophisticated portrayal of the meaning of the atonement," in Loma Linda became in Portland "a complex and intricate approach the extent of which is debatable [but] more extensive than is healthy." And then he turns Jeremiah, predicting, "If this approach to the atonement gains supremacy in Seventh-day Adventism, it will reduce Adventism to lawlessness, and it will mean the end of Adventism as it is historically." "Adventism," he promised, "will become a worse form of Babylonianism than at the beginning."

But he's not through. Siphoning off the

sound of his own voice, he announces, "that this [demonstrative] approach to the atonement finally reduces Adventism to something worse than sloppy, sentimentalistic Babylonianism." And then rejects the picture of God's love portrayed by Dr. Maxwell saying, "It's not an ooey, gooey, funny sentimentalistic sort of throb in the heart of the pancreas somewhere." It's not an "airy, fairy, eternal attribute as such."

A few minutes later Dr. Glenn Ruminson kindly but properly chastened Paxton's excess this way: "The charging bull of rhetorical labeling has two horns; one horn is a horn which crystalizes concepts — the characterization allows us to see what is being said just

**"While the theologians need not agree, they must avoid theological hubris, realizing they are not Paul, and that it is unseemly for any of them to suggest that their theological opponents be cast out."**

by a phrase, the other horn is an emotional horn which for a person in favor of the subject encourages very strongly a movement in that direction, and for a person who seems not in favor, it clouds the issue." "[Let's] turn back the rhetorical bull that's been let loose in the barnyard."

Glenn Ruminson's "twin-horned, rhetorical bull" — a generic bull's eye — describing the truth that although specific theologies come and go, rhetorical totalism hangs ubiquitously in the air, searching for the theologian-on-the-make, and in Geoffrey Paxton I believe it found one.

Wherever he went, Paxton made sport of Elder Don Neufeld whom he quoted as saying, "It is the genius of Adventism to have many gospels," bragging that his response was, "I hope when the loud cry is given everybody doesn't run in a different direction."

Paxton has his fun, and the temptation at this point is irresistible to note that it isn't

only lady prophets who are given "wax noses," but male reformers, too, by Desmond Ford and Hans LaRondelle — lobbing reformation hand grenades back and forth in the pages of SPECTRUM. Crediting Paxton the phrasemaker, we might ask, "Will the real Martin Luther please stand up?"

Confronted by the Janissaries of the reformers, we may be consoled by Chesterton's reminder that many dogmas are liberating because the damage they do when abused cannot compare with the damage that might have been done had not whole cultures felt their inhibiting influence.

In sorting it all out, there are some rough guidelines that may warn us of extremes as we choose a theology. For example, we must not fall prey to "chronological snobbery," C. S. Lewis' term for "the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate of one's own age on the supposition that what is most recent is best." At the same time, theology must be seen as more than the handing down of the parerga from generation to generation.

Also, when listening to our theologians, we must listen for either manifestation of the theological nostrum peddler. Doubt him if he promises a remedy that is exclusively ours or for the dogmatic advertising of a theological elixir — a remedy for every sickness.

While the theologians need not agree, they must avoid theological hubris, realizing they are not Paul, and that it is unseemly for any of them to suggest that their theological opponents be cast out. But we should understand at least why they disagree. And without falling victim to the solipsist's cynical conviction that truth is subjective, we must realize that within certain definable parameters — say the confines of the Christian faith — theological tendencies are, at least in part, a function of the individual theologian's personality or temperament.

If the view of the Gospel which attracts us most is largely a function of personality, which view would draw the most of it? Or, could we attract more adherents by maintaining several? Paul says if even an angel should come preaching another Gospel we should evict him. Does Paul demand, then, that we choose a theology, and having chosen, consider the others anathema? I think not.

Each of our religious expositors has brought his personal life's history and chemistry to the reading of Scripture, and each understands the one, true, paradigmatic Gospel the way we hear them expound it. Some are probably more faithful to the true — and yet unseen — fact of theology. Nevertheless, each of us will always move toward a view which he or she finds most winsome.

When Jesus said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all unto me," He didn't mean just inadequate, or just authoritarian, or just passive-aggressive, or just schizoid personalities. He meant the whole hospital full of persons in need of healing. And woe unto him that bolts the door to the emergency room!

I hope — along with Don Neufeld — to be saying something more interesting (when defending the continued existence of a plurality of understandings of the one Gospel) than that variety is life's great spice. Although the Bible contains sufficient and saving truth, it remains for any scholar — or group of scholars — to abstract its basic message to everyone's satisfaction, parsimoniously. And that fact is much less a commentary on truth than on the capricious nature of human personality.

We all — but especially leadership — must suppress the concupiscent longing for one correct theology, the hunting for which is comparably disappointing to the search for pterodactyl eggs. Our leaders should busy themselves, instead, nurturing the remnant — Isaiah's important calling we remember.

Then perhaps we can shed the religious odium that clings to our Laodicean name (our drab institutional servitude) that Adventism might crystallize as the denomination where the worshipper truly became the church; a church whose expositors are most "concerned to describe. . . God in words which do the least damage to all the facts as given"; and most importantly to explain, understandably, in the idiom of our time, why it was that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified and rose the third day.

Douglas Hackleman  
Loma Linda, California

To the Editors: Lewis (Vol. 9, No. 4) makes a point of logic which, from the context of this letter, appears to be based upon the following assumptions:

1. Paxton is an opponent rather than a fellow Christian.
2. Winning debating points is the equivalent of finding truth.
3. If others are shaking, never mind our instability.
4. The faith issue is only one of many doctorinal issues rather than the watershed of the church.
5. Paxton and God must wait until we precisely define what God has done or is doing.

Implicit to the Lewis logic — to reject these assumptions is to be illogical. However, could not these assumptions be symptomatic of the triumphalism which has plagued our evangelism, tarnished our witness and thwarted our apprehension of the precise definition for which Lewis hopes?

Thomas J. Zwemer, D.D.S., M.S.D.  
Medical College of Georgia  
School of Dentistry

## On Professional Organizations

To the Editors: In her listing of Seventh-day Adventist professional organizations, Jocey Fay failed to include the association of foreign language teachers. The information on this organization follows:

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS  
Adventist Language Teachers' Association

President: Wolfgang Kunze  
Andrews University  
Berrien Springs, MI 49104

Established: 1967

Number of members: More than 100

Membership: Open to Seventh-day Adventist teachers of one or more classes of modern or classic foreign language or English as a second language in church school, public school, college or university.  
Full membership fee \$6.50

Student member: Any graduate or undergraduate foreign language major or interested student who is taking a degree in foreign language. Student membership fee: \$3.50

Institutional membership: \$10 per calendar year per full-time language faculty member.

Purpose: 1. To foster and maintain a standard of excellence in language teaching in Seventh-day Adventist institutions in accord with the philosophy and objectives of Seventh-day Adventist education.

2. To explore and make known to members new developments and opportunities in language teaching and learning.

3. To promote the study of foreign language and the ideals of the organization.

Publications: *Alta Vox*. Published in the fall and spring of each year, and sent to full members.

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## On "Genesis"

**T**o the Editors: I would like to make a few comments regarding your "Genesis" issue (Vol. 9, No. 4).

Lawrence Geraty is correct when he surmised that some of us had wanted the Geoscience Field Conference to devote itself to the creationist interpretation, but I am puzzled that he thought this somehow unscientific. The public schools and state-supported universities present only the evolutionary interpretation. Scientific magazines present only the evolutionary interpretation. *Scientific American* devoted a recent issue to evolution; the entire issue was exclusively devoted to evolution. There was not one article written from a creationist viewpoint. The so-called Nobel Laureates of America have gotten together more than once and issued joint statements condemning any suggestion that any viewpoint except the evolutionary viewpoint should be presented to America's young people. All of us on the Geoscience Field Conference have heard the evolutionary viewpoint again and again and again. Personally, I have heard it for more than four decades. At last, here was an opportunity to hear the creationist viewpoint presented for just four weeks. Frankly, it was a disappointment—a puzzling disappointment—that some members of the group felt a burden to consume this valuable time presenting an evolutionary viewpoint.

All of us want to believe the truth, so far as it can be determined. But how are we going to know what is true unless we test the evolu-

tionary viewpoint by a deep and careful study of the creationist interpretation? Personally, I had hoped that these four weeks would see the evolutionary viewpoint challenged from every possible angle. I was grateful to those people who challenged it.

Lawrence Geraty quoted me correctly in saying that some of our scientists are finding good support for the creationist position. Geraty himself refers to the three senior members of the Geoscience Research Institute and also to Ivan Holmes and Clyde Webster. These five presented some particularly good material. But I notice that they were very open about the fact that they were looking for answers to the problems posed by the evolution theory. It was equally evident that some of the other speakers were not looking for answers to those problems. What impressed me was that answers were being found by men who were looking. But they were not being found by men who were not looking for them.

I think that some of our young scientists, with the best of good intentions, thought that if they made a few experiments in their laboratories they could smash the entire evolutionary structure with a single, simple blow and emerge the great champion of biblical creationism. So they performed their experiments and made their observations and discovered to their very great surprise that the evolutionary theory was supported by far stronger arguments than they had ever imagined. Tragically, some of them capitulated to the evolutionary theory and even went so far as to tell our church members that they also ought to go over to the other side.

And I would like to encourage our young men who are overawed by the evolution theory and who feel that they ought to fight creationism and oppose those within the church who defend creationism that if they will come over on the creationist side and seek supportive arguments for creation and oppose the evolution theory, they will find the battle just as exciting, and in the end much more satisfying.

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*Signs of the Times*