The White Lie: Two Perspectives

Prophet or Plagiarist: A False Dichotomy

Walter T. Rea. *The White Lie.* Foreward by Jerry Wiley. 409 pp. Turlock, Calif.: M&R Publications, 1982. $15.95; $12.50 (paper).

reviewed by Jonathan Butler

In *The White Lie,* Walter Rea argues —exclaims, really—that much of Ellen White's writings are the words and ideas of others, used as if they were her own, or God's. By claiming not only a deep literary indebtedness but a lack of integrity on the part of Mrs. White, Rea strikes at the root of her prophetic authority.

The charge of fakery, charlatanry, or dishonesty is the most serious of indictments against any prophet. Laying no claim to traditional, legal, or professional status, prophets answer to a personal, charismatic calling. Unlike other positions of authority, *prophetic* authority relies almost exclusively on individual ethos and credibility. Prophets "bear fruit" only as they are *believed.* There is no such thing as a prophet without honor from someone, somewhere. Prophetic writings are printed and circulated and preserved because someone has found them inspiring. Prophetic predictions succeed as people that believe them set about to fulfill them. To lose trust in the prophets, then, is to lose them *as prophets.* For this reason, while they may be unembarrassed by their obscure origins, poor education, or lowly station, prophets cannot tolerate an assault on their "good name." In Shakespeare's words, it is "the immediate jewel of their souls." As any prophet might say to a detractor, he "who steals my purse steals trash. . . . But he that filches from me my good name, Robs me of that which not enriches him, And makes me poor indeed."[1]

If the loss of credibility damages a prophet, it is the charge of plagiarism that has particularly hurt *nineteenth-century* prophets. Not only Ellen White but Joseph Smith and Mary Baker Eddy have been the objects of literary debunking, because they assumed a fundamentally literary identity. The Victorian period was an age of mass print. Magazines, novels, newspapers, and tracts proliferated as never before. Victorian women in particular found access to the age by a seemingly ceaseless literary outpouring. In a society that denied them direct political, ecclesiastical, and economic power, women exerted a vicarious "influence" from the writing lapboards of their bedrooms. In her own remarkably influential career, then, Mrs. White was not so much an ecclesiastical personna as a "*pen* of inspiration." For Victorians, inspired writing came "from the heart," which implied a kind of originality, extemporaneousness, prolixity, and, by the standards

Jonathan Butler is an associate professor of church history at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

of the day, elegance. For several generations of Adventists, Mrs. White has more than satisfied this Victorian index of inspiration. But a literary analysis that faults her according to any of these criteria is bound to call for a basic reexamination of either the inspired writer or the nature of inspiration.

All this is to say that Rea deserves credit for raising highly important questions. However, ineptly or cruelly he has framed them, or however baffled he remains personally in the face of them, his questions require careful consideration. It would be too easy and ultimately too costly to Seventh-day Adventism to dismiss Rea *ad hominem*. This would be to retaliate in kind to the unfortunate personal innuendo in his own argument. For just as psycho-history is commonly considered inappropriate among Adventists as a method of understanding their pioneers, it is as well a dubious method of accounting for the contemporary critics of Adventism. Nevertheless, it is impossible to ignore the strident personal tone throughout the book. Rea appears to be a man who has been emotionally hurt, perhaps tortured, by what he has uncovered. His book is a manifest effort to get others to experience what he has experienced, to share his pain, and thereby ease its burden for him. Nothing disturbs Rea more than the churchmen and theologians who reconcile themselves to evidence that they have found either less compelling or overwhelming than it has been for him. He reacts with the harshness of a man who feels not only misunderstood but abused. Unfortunately, his pain displays itself as anger—and an angry man attracts less sympathy than hostility.

Standing upon his exhibits of literary dependence as if they were a soapbox, he pontificates on the nature of God, man, sin, theology, the church, and even fiscal mismanagement. But what in his discovery of literary indebtedness or plagiarism equips Rea to speak on such a range of unrelated topics? Clearly nothing. Source criticism by itself is a conceptually narrow enterprise. Reading primarily Ellen White's writings and, subsequently, titles listed in her personal library, Rea came upon literary parallels. Establishing ties between one author and others is a long, laborious, and tiresome process. Rea should be thanked for having undertaken this necessary and significant task. But the limited scope of his reading—and analysis—which especially qualified him as a source critic, left him decidedly unqualified to explore the significance of the parallels he found. Rea's footnotes expose a soft underbelly to his work. Aside from references to Ellen White and the authors from whom she borrowed, Rea relies mostly on in-house Adventist writings, tapes, minutes of meetings, and telephone conversations. Had he produced simply an anthology of his literary exhibits, with a brief introduction which adhered modestly to the topic at hand, the importance and impact of his study might have been enhanced considerably.

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Instead, Rea erects a rather precarious model of interpretation on the literary material he has unearthed. He proposes that Ellen White's "lie" is only one example of the "white lies" perpetuated as myths, legends, and falsehoods by all institutions, especially religious ones. Drawing upon Sam M. Baker's *The Permissible Lie* and Eric Hoffer's *The True Believer,* Rea indicts all organized religion as a "con game" whose leaders are "supersalesmen of the psychic," peddling their wares to naive and credulous "buyers." The real issue of religion is "who is going to control the concessions in the here and in the hereafter" (p. 30). (Certainly Rea will not ingratiate himself to evangelicals with this line of argument.) But if

organized religion is an emperor without clothes, and if saints are hucksters, how does this explain the Reformers or the martyrs, Mother Teresa or Jesus Christ? Indeed, for Rea, Christ is in a category by himself, the "Saint of all saints." And yet why? Because there is still a spiritual dimension for Rea, however cynical he has become, which cannot be explained away in terms of power or greed. Turning his own argument back on him, someone might say Rea only wrote *The White Lie* for royalties. But this would be patent nonsense. Only the most spiritually insensitive of readers would fail to sense the passion and spiritual turmoil in Rea's book. Rea, like the object of his study, does not lend himself to an utterly crass and reductionist explanation.

What proves most unsatisfying about Rea's interpretation is that it betrays the same rigid fundamentalism of his earlier years, albeit now a *naughty* fundamentalism. Rea still can accept only an all-or-nothing solution. Either Ellen White is infallible or a fake. Either her writings are the immaculate conception of the Holy Spirit or they are a literary hoax. Even more absurdly, if Mrs. White is not an angel, then all religion is a deception. Like other fundamentalists, Rea is piqued by any suggestion of a solution that threads itself somewhere between these extremes.[2] The passion by which he now rejects Mrs. White reveals the absolute hold on him of his fundamentalist understanding of inspiration. If Mrs. White lacked originality, or was influenced by contemporaries, or was not a great literary stylist, then she could not have been inspired. Rea offers no new model of inspiration because he entirely embraces the old one. He agrees with Arthur L. White and quotes him approvingly on page 118 as follows:

> If the messages borne by Ellen G. White had their origin in surrounding minds or influences; if the messages on organization can be traced to the ideas of James White or George I. Butler; if the counsels on health had their origin in the minds of Drs. Jackson, Trall or Kellogg; if the instruction on education was based upon ideas of G. H. Bell or W. W. Prescott; if the high standards upheld in the Ellen G. White articles and books were inspired by the strong men of the cause —then the Spirit of Prophecy counsels can mean no more to us than some very good ideas and helpful advice![3]

When Rea adds "How true" he expresses everything about his disenchantment with Mrs. White. She falls short of his unrealistic expectations. He reminds us of Othello who, in that tragic moment after killing the woman he loved, asks to be remembered as "one that loved not wisely but too well . . ."[4]

In so many ways, Rea has become his uncharitable caricature of Ellen White, transforming himself into his own uglier image of the prophet. He interprets historical developments as the conspiracy of an elite and immoral minority of people—in this case "the White boys." He eschews the academic argument for the jeremiad. He short-circuits historical explanations by casting moral blame. He slights issues in favor of personal gossip. In a perversely ironic way, he must be one of the few people in our time who has spent a "thoughtful hour each day on the life of Christ," though in his instance as a source critic of *The Desire of Ages*. And certainly he could have benefited from the literary assistants that he begrudges Mrs. White; his book is a tangle of unruly organization and unhappy style.

That Rea's book is an easy target for critics, however, should not truncate this line of inquiry into Mrs. White's literary sources. Nor should Rea's failure to offer an adequate interpretative paradigm of his own suggest that previous paradigms are any longer satisfactory in light of his discoveries.

How then might Ellen White's prophetic writings be understood? One characteristic of prophets which is evident here is their own realization that truth can never be fully communicated in words. Prophets experience truth more deeply and profoundly than their followers, and the effort to convey their insights inevitably involves distortion. Lesser minds expect prophets to provide the whole truth, and yet prophets themselves understand, at times painfully, that their message inevitably falls short of a higher

truth. Every prophet is to a degree a charlatan in the sense that he promises more than he can deliver. The writing process, then, difficult under any circumstances, may be agonizingly difficult for a prophet. In Truman Capote's words on writing, "When God hands you a gift, he also hands you a whip. . . ."

If Mrs. White's expressions of insecurity as a writer, her literary dependence first on her husband and then on a staff of assistants, and her borrowing from other authors are evidence of her human limitations, they indicate as well that common experience of prophets who seek as weak, earthen vessels to brim with as much of the truth as possible. Prophets can be expected to reach for literary assistance, not out of ill-motive or fraud, but out of the highest of spiritual motives and the securest sense of their own spiritual calling. Ellen White was so saturated with the consciousness that God was leading in a special way in her life that she looked for—and "was shown"—His hand everywhere: in her day visions, her night dreams, her personal readings, and her conversations with others. God was the fountainhead, and these were the streams of His communication. For her to concede to critics that her human "sources" were anything less than links to the divine Source itself would have been to deny something so fundamental to her self-understanding as to make her indeed a liar.

In this regard, the relationship of a prophet to a people brings to mind the analogy of a mother's relationship to her children. The mother who has been through the births of her children knows them beyond any doubt to be her own. Yet a six-year-old may have his own definition of a mother—she wears perfume, fixes him lunches, knows absolutely everything, and never uses profanity. His mother may try to fulfill these six-year-old expectations, even when they are unrealistic, not because of any insecurity in her own mind about the fact that she is his mother, nor certainly to mislead the child regarding what is in fact essentially true. The child may expect too much of mother, and mother may, at times, mistakenly though innocently fulfill her child's illusions. But here the image of mother requires changing—as it invariably does over time—not the unalterable fact of her motherhood. So it is with prophets. The *perception* of them may require a dramatic maturation process that still acknowledges them *as prophets.*

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As a result of Rea's indefatigable efforts, we have learned lately of the extent to which Ellen White's writings are part of a vast genre of Victorian devotional literature, much as Daniel and Revelation are the Scriptural remnants of a whole tapestry of non-canonical apocalyptic literature. The reason that Daniel or John of Patmos or Mrs. White are still known to us while their contemporaries have receded from the church's collective memory is because the church considered their writings, from the outset, special and worth preserving. An historical naiveté about their immediate literary surroundings was bound to develop with the authority they assumed. An ill effect of this is the artificial and misplaced sense of uniqueness that can occur over time, as well as the outright misunderstandings of texts that result when read in cultural and literary isolation. Rea's work should help free future Adventist generations from just this snare. The point here, however, is that inspired texts are with us at all, not due to some sort of dark conspiracy, but by means of canonization (not of course formally in Ellen White's case). God's hand in this process is not simply in the origins of the texts but in the preservation of them. One key difference between Henry Melvill's sermons and Ellen White's writings is that we *remember* her writings. Her impact on our

memory is one mark of her inspiration for us.

My own view is that the source and redaction criticism of Mrs. White's literary contribution cannot discredit her. She produced religious classics for a large, dynamic community of people. Higher criticism cannot possibly plumb the meaning of them. Like the phenomenologists tell us, it is not so much the text but what is "in front" of the text that engages us. Mrs. White's writings hold rich significance for the Adventist people. The whole is more than the sum of its parts for us. Why texts take on this religious authority for people is itself a fascinating—and inspiring—story, more so even than where they came from. Why people continue to reinterpret them from generation to generation without ever wearing them out. Why in fact an Adventist pastor should devote almost 20 years to an exhaustive literary analysis of them. That in itself speaks of their significance.

Without Rea's extensive literary revelations, of course, much less of the really creative opportunities for the re-thinking of our doctrine of inspiration would be open to us in this generation of Adventism. And no doubt the next generation of Adventists will grow up at the knee of a different Ellen White than this one. Indeed, I look forward to the day that the church would no longer spawn either an early or a later Walter Rea. My hunch is that Rea himself shares the same hope.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. William Shakespeare, *Othello,* III, iii.
2. For example, Jack Provonsha's, "Was Ellen White a Fraud?" *Collegiate Quarterly,* July-Sept., 1981.
3. *Review and Herald,* May 1, 1959, as quoted in *The White Lie,* p. 118.
4. *Othello,* V. ii.

The Imperfect Speech of Inspiration

reviewed by Alden Thompson

After months of suspense, Walter Rea finally has unmasked *The White Lie.* The garish cover and earthy prose match its provocative title. Only its patrician price seems out of character. Whatever else one might say about the book and its author, Rea indeed has caught the attention of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is unlikely that Adventism ever has anticipated any publishing event with such intensity.

Formerly one of the church's most devoted believers in Ellen White, Rea relentlessly has sought to force a reluctant community to come to grips with the human element in its prophetic gift. International newspaper coverage, numerous speaking appointments, and widely-circulated cassette tapes agitated the church to the point that rebuttals of the book began to appear before the book ever came from the press.[1] Partially as a result of Rea's agitation, the Ellen G. White Estate is taking source analysis seriously. The church has even funded a special two-year project to determine the nature of Ellen White's use of sources in her book *The Desire of Ages.*

Because of his flamboyance and high visibility, Rea left very few secrets to be revealed in the book. Nevertheless, many, at least in the academic community, had hoped that the spectre of publication would encourage Rea to be sober in his observations and to present his data in a form that would be helpful to the church. In that respect the book is a "great disappointment." In fact, the style—more than the content—raises unexpected questions as to the possible impact of the book on Adventism.

Alden Thompson, professor of religion at Walla Walla College, received his doctorate in Old Testament at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

The content deserves attention, but seldom have I read a book where style so thoroughly overwhelms content. In the foreword, Jerry Wiley[2] describes Rea's judgments as "deliberately harsh" (p. x/16),[3] and the same is true of his style and vocabulary. The results of this lively approach are often biting and personal. Exaggerations are carried to the point of contradicting other assertions in the book. Thus Ellen White can be depicted as the victim of external domination, on the one hand; and, on the other, as the all-powerful determinant in Adventism. A couple of quotations may serve to illustrate:

> No one can successfully challenge the fact that the White boys, from James to Arthur, have set the music, played the tune, and pulled the strings of the Ellen G. White marionette show. Ellen may or may not have done little to restrain her legend, but much evidence indicates that she was swept before its flood by her own supersalesmen (p. 193).
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> Adventism has stood at the crossroads before. Those poor children of the 1844 beginnings closed the door of mercy for all but themselves. Much evidence now says that, with very little help, Ellen herself shoved the door shut. Since then, that door has never really been opened wide, despite propaganda to that effect spewed out through the church's world-wide organization. The granting of mercy was just transferred to some heavenly courtroom, where believers would be selectively allowed access to Christ through Ellen and her writings (p. 258).

That passionate tone permeates the book, blurring the lines of organization and making it difficult to perceive how Rea understands some of the more significant implications of his research.

The prologue is autobiographical, sketching Rea's transition from devoted admirer of Ellen White to disillusioned author of *The White Lie*. The fourteen chapters that follow are very loosely organized and offer the reader an impressionistic sketch of Rea's research and experience. The initial chapters touch on Adventist origins and the development of what Rea describes as the Ellen G. White "myth" or "legend" (cf. p. xvi/22). He raises the plagiarism issue and then devotes a chapter to each book in the Conflict of the Ages series. The remaining chapters deal with the further development of the Ellen White corpus, the church's use of Ellen White's writings, and the implications of Rea's research for the future of Adventism. Extensive appendices, containing parallels between Ellen White's writings and contemporary devotional literature, conclude the book. For someone heretofore unfamiliar with Rea's work, these parallels probably will constitute the most notable aspect of the book.

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In terms of defining the purpose of the book, the final chapter (14) is the most revealing. There Rea draws on the imagery of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse to portray his vision of the Adventist church. The rider of the white horse symbolizes the Davenport affair (pp. 263–67); the red horse is the "Glacier View puppet show" (p. 268), a phrase Rea uses to describe the church's handling of the Ford challenge (pp. 267–70); Rea himself is the rider of the black horse (pp. 270–72); the rider of the last horse, the pale one, is not clearly defined, but its symbolism is unmistakable: "The fourth horseman on the pale horse was the last to ride out. According to the Revelator, his name was Death" (p. 275). Glimmers of loyalty occasionally surface in the book, suggesting that Rea does not really want his church to die.[4] But for now, as the rider of the black horse, Rea envisions his own role in Adventism as follows:

> Rea, on the other hand, was a guerilla fighter. He seemed to be aiming for the

> jugular. His studies were meant to tip the scales against the authority of Ellen and her writings—which as a consequence would bypass the authority of the super-salesmen of the system and would leave every man his own priest before God. Such an idea—if it ever really caught on—would be not only frightening but downright horrifying to a system based on the interpretation of truth by a prophet (pp. 270–71).

The writings of Ellen White have played a significant and positive role in my spiritual and intellectual experience;[5] but, even without my bias, I would find it incredible to cast Ellen White as the villain rather than a hero of Adventist history.[6] I am quite aware of many of the problems and frustrations with which Walter Rea has been struggling, and I believe his research will help Seventh-day Adventists deal more realistically with Ellen White and better understand the phenomenon of inspiration.

Many had hoped Rea could present his material in such a way that the church could perceive his labors in a positive light. At one point that may have been possible. In his book Rae suggests that if the White Estate had "circulated, or even leaked" a certain document to the church and the world "this book might not have been written" (p. 83).[7] Yet the level of disenchantment that the book reveals suggests that it would not have been easy for him to give up his battle to "tip the scales against the authority of Ellen and her writings" (p. 270).

As the book now stands, it actually may be more valuable for the study of the psychology of religion than for Ellen White studies or for the study of Adventist history.[8] The stage for the love/hate cycle is set by the very first lines of Rea's story:

> Almost from the first time I heard of her, early in my teens, I became a devotee of Ellen G. White and her writings. I learned to type by copying from her book *Messages to Young People.* In high school and college, I often went from room to room in the dormitory, gathering Ellen White quotations from others to use in my preparations for becoming a minister in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (p. xiii/19).

That was Rea's early experience. But now, when "Adventist divines" attempt to defend Ellen White's literary approach, Rea responds: "Why drag God into it and insist that He sanctioned it?" (p. 164). Rea recognizes the problem as he explains in the prologue: "Much study remains to be done on the question of why some of us accept as much as we do from whomever we do. What thing is it deep within us that is tapped to make us react as unquestioningly as we do to unreliable information—so that we make it 'truth' and let it govern our thinking and our lives?" (p. xvi/22f). He then goes on to admit rather candidly: "At this stage in my thinking, if there is blame left to be assessed or portioned out, I must accept much of it for having been so gullible . . ." (p. xvii/23). Rea gives us glimpses of his transitional experience, but had he been more precise in tracing the sequence of events and key factors in his alienation, the value of the book would have been greatly enhanced for those interested in the dynamics of human religious experience.

Yet as interesting as Rea's experience may be, it would be wrong to overlook the book's arguments. Because Rea's previous experience and attitudes find many parallels in the believing community, many will be threatened with the same disillusionment that he experienced should they see the data that contributed to his about-face. The church must take seriously both his experience and his arguments.

Turning to his arguments, I would summarize his primary contentions as follows:[9] Ellen White made extensive use of human sources in the preparation of her books; Ellen White and her assistants did not always disclose the use of human source, choosing rather to attribute her insights directly to God; church leaders have used Ellen White's authority to maintain their control of the church.

I would judge all three contentions to be at least partially true.[10] But even if they were *completely* true, they would be irrelevant for determining Ellen White's prophetic status—unless one assumed that a

prophetic authority should not use sources. That Rea makes this key assumption is remarkably clear from the following statement that Rea himself italicizes: "For its [sic] is obvious that if the church, or Ellen, or her helpers, had honestly revealed from whom and how much they were taking from others, *God their pretended authority, would be exposed as very minor, if not nonexistent in their program*" (p. 207).[11]

Someone who holds this assumption must reject any element of humanity as no longer authoritative. Thus, Rea feels bound to discard the use of the term "authority" with reference to Ellen White (p. 168). He does speak of her "pastoral inspiration"; but, for him, that is a human not a divine quality (p. 170). He states that "the church has never come to grips with her authority over facts, policies and practices" (p. 168). Because of Rea's assumptions about inspiration, his research has led him to consider Ellen White as carrying no more weight than any other member of the Adventist community—a conclusion that is quite unacceptable to the church.

In Rea's case, an additional assumption is also evident that has deep roots in the minds of conservative believers: true prophets do not change.[12] If, then, in a weak moment, one discovers both *sources* and *change*, disillusionment and the "cover-up" argument almost inevitably follow.

The "cover-up" argument is clearly the most difficult for conservative believers to handle.[13] But I am convinced that Rea's experience provides some of the best evidence as to why there has been a necessary and well-intentioned "cover-up" or, put in another way, why Ellen White and her assistants gradually—even reluctantly—revealed the human methods by which the prophet operated. Full disclosure would have led some to conclude that God was *"nonexistent in their program"* (p. 207).

The biblical precedent for a "cover-up" was established by Christ himself: "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). Every parent and teacher can testify to the truth of that statement. Awareness and growth only can come gradually. For those who are inclined to think in stark either/or terms, any trace of humanity is enough to rob the Word of its divine credentials. In a community with just such inclinations, Ellen White emphasized that her message came from God, not man. To have done otherwise would have been a betrayal of her calling.

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But as time went on, both she and the community came to the place where it was possible to understand more of the human element without denying the divine. Yet "true believers," to use Rea's term, tend to resist the evidence. Thus the love/hate cycle remains a threat in the community.

Adventists attempted to face the problem in 1919, but turned back. After four decades in the "wilderness" we are again at the borders of Canaan, deciding whether we will enter. God is always ready to lead.

Rea has refused to come to grips with the human element in Scripture, such as the differences in parallel accounts and the use of noninspired sources by the biblical writers, but I am convinced that the Adventist community as a whole must be prepared to deal reverently yet honestly with the one document that we all agree is the foundation for any theory of inspiration: the Bible.[14] Once we have done our homework there, the evidence relative to Ellen White's writings no longer will appear devastating, shocking, or disturbing, but will be seen to be quite in keeping with the methods that God always has used to communicate to man.

No one can predict the kind of impact *The White Lie* will have on the work of the Adventist church, but a few observations

are in order. The academic community both within and without the church will cringe at the level of scholarship evident in the book. It is simply too passionate, too vindictive, too careless.[15] The popular media, however, likely will have a field day with the book. The secular press relishes the agony of a disenchanted believer. The conservative Christian community also will make use of the book, though its harsh tone may tend to limit its circulation to the far right.[16] Should the price come down, Rea's book may find a place alongside Canright's books in the Christian warfare against "cults."

Within the Adventist community, I see four basic reactions to Rea's material. First, the "true believers" will continue to deny the evidence, just as Rea did for many years. Vigilantes may even seek to malign some of the scholars whom Rea cites as supporting his position. Many scholars quoted favorably by Rea differ sharply from him in that they by no means reject Ellen White's prophetic status, and it would be tragic if their ministry were to be hampered as a result of the distortion of their position.

A second reaction to Rea's material is the position that Rea himself seems to have adopted. It involves a critical stance towards Ellen White and a non-critical stance towards Scripture. Rea is still gripped by the authority of Scripture. As long as he can avoid questioning Scripture in the way that he has questioned Ellen White's writings, his faith is secure, albeit ill-informed. Those who are deeply steeped in the Christian tradition are often able to maintain this position for themselves without recognizing how vulnerable it is for open and enquiring minds. When college students read their Bibles, such a dichotomous approach is hardly the answer to the inspiration question.

A third reaction is possible, generally at more sophisticated levels, and often involves those with deep Adventist roots. They see the implications of critical studies both for Scripture and for the writings of Ellen White and struggle against the spectre of agnosticism and atheism.

A fourth reaction is the one that I hope will win the day, but it is a position that does not come easily. It seeks to retain the human element in inspiration, but does not allow humanity to rob an inspired word of its divine power.[17]

With reference to Scripture, Ellen White wrote in 1901: "The Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech, in order that the degenerate senses, the dull, earthly perception, of earthly beings may comprehend His words. Thus is shown God's condescension."[18] When Walter Rea wrote *The White Lie* he was not yet willing to let the Lord speak in imperfect speech. His experience has been painful and bitter. If the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to blame, then perhaps we are all guilty. For who can share the truth except those who believe?

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The following rebuttals have been most visible, given here in the order in which they appeared:
Robert W. Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary and Ellen White* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, March 1981).
"Was Ellen G. White a Plagiarist?" A reprint of articles published in the *Adventist Review*, Sept. 17, 1981, featuring an interview with attorney Vincent L. Ramik.
John J. Robertson, *The White Truth* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1981).
Olson includes a number of parallel exhibits and is remarkably candid when commenting on Ellen White's literary practices. The *Adventist Review* articles addressed the legal aspects of the plagiarism issue, though an interview with Ramik (a Roman Catholic) revealed the positive spiritual impact of Ellen White's writings on Ramik's own experience. Robertson's book constitutes a popular defense of Ellen White's prophetic ministry along traditional lines. In spite of certain inconsistencies, many church members will undoubtedly find the book helpful, especially the first two chapters dealing with sources and plagiarism.

2. Jerry Wiley is an Adventist attorney identified in the book as Associate Dean and Professor of Law at the University of Southern California School of Law.

3. References to the foreword and prologue in *The White Lie* are complicated by the absence of page numbers. Beginning with the first title page, preliminary matters occupy pp. i-xxii (my numbering). Formal pagination begins thereafter, however, not with page 23, but with page 29. Hence I indicate references to the foreword and the prologue by two systems, one numbering forward from the title page (pp. i–xxii) and one numbering back from chapter 1 (pp. 7–28). The starting point is always p. i/7.

Presumably an earlier foreword and prologue were replaced by a shorter one just prior to publication.

4. Rea frequently speaks sarcastically, ironically, or flippantly about biblical matter (e.g., pp. 43, 45, 51), Adventist doctrine and experience (eg., pp. 30, 57–58, 194–95), and Adventist standards or life-style (e.g., pp. 37, 251). But a lingering and deep-seated loyalty is suggested by his selection of quotations from *The Desire of Ages* at the close of chapter 14 (p. 275) and from *Christ's Object Lessons* in the Epilogue (p. 279). After referring several times to the near-impossibility of the Adventist life-style (cf., pp. 43, 62, 251), he surprisingly reveals a more positive sentiment when he says: "It wasn't the Adventist lifestyle that the people wanted to overthrow" (p. 272).

5. The positive role of Ellen White's writings in my own experience and theology is revealed indirectly in the five-part series, "From Sinai to Golgotha," published in the *Adventist Review* (Dec. 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, 1981), and in the article, "Even the Investigative Judgment Can Be Good News," *Westwind* (Walla Walla College alumni journal), Vol. 2, No. 1 (Winter 1982).

6. From Rea's book, an otherwise uninformed reader would learn virtually nothing of the crucial General Conferences of 1888 and 1901, to say nothing of Ellen White's significant role in supporting creative change at both conferences.

For a concise and balanced treatment of both events, see Richard Schwarz, *Light-bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1979), pp. 183–197, 267–281. An earlier work discussing both events has recently been reprinted: A. V. Olson, *Thirteen Years of Crisis: 1888–1901* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966, 1981). Pp. 1–335. Formerly: *Through Crisis to Victory*. An appendix includes Ellen White's devotional addresses given at the 1888 General Conference.

7. Reference is to Robert W. Olson's article, "EGW's Use of Uninspired Sources," photocopied (Washington, D.C.: EGW Estate, Nov. 1979). An interesting glimpse into Rea's attitude towards negotiation and advice is given in the Prologue: "Despite much good counsel to the contrary, I have chosen the title *The White Lie* for my book" (p. xvi/22).

8. Besides the problems of simple carelessness (cf. note 3 above) and omission (cf. note 6 above), other problems seriously detract from the book's usefulness. For example, Rea often relies on secondary sources for his conclusions. He is particularly fond of Ingemar Linden, *The Last Trump* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1978) and Robert D. Brinsmead, *Judged by the Gospel* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Verdict Publications, 1980). Even more frustrating from a researcher's point of view is his occasional practice of citing primary material without indicating its present location and availability. The 1883 Uriah Smith—D. M. Canright correspondence (pp. 60–61) is fascinating. But where can the correspondence be located? The history of the development of the Introduction to the 1888 *The Great Controversy* is highly significant for Rea's argument. Yet there is merely an allusion to the "controversy" on p. 50, a quote from John Harvey Kellogg on p. 116, and further discussion on pp. 138–39. The only documentation refers to an "authentic interview" with Kellogg held on Oct. 7, 1907. Rea records it as a "notarized stenographic report" (p. 75, note 9). But where is it available to the researcher?

A further scholarly flaw is Rea's tendency to generalize with reference to his sources. After referring to one article from SPECTRUM in 1971, he lists no further articles, but simply states: "Others have appeared in SPECTRUM each year since 1971" (p. 97, note 3). In another instance he describes circumstances which indicate that "disaster of large proportions inevitably waits in the wings." He adds in the next paragraph: "That is what many Adventists think is now the situation in the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (p. 263). For documentation he states: "The articles published in SPECTRUM from 1978 to 1981 bear out this observation about the condition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (p. 275, note 1). Such generalizations enhance neither Rea's reputation nor SPECTRUM's.

Rea does cite a great deal of primary material, and much of it is cogent. But when he deliberately cites confidential letters and tapes, it is a "Matter of Ethics," to quote his own title of Chapter 11. Some of the "stolen" material he frankly labels as confidential (e.g. a Robert Olson letter of Nov. 29, 1978; p. 83 and pp. 101–105). He does not indicate, however, that the tapes of the Glendale meeting of Jan. 28–29, 1980 (see report by Douglas Hackleman, "GC Committee Studies Ellen White Sources," SPECTRUM, Vol. 10, No. 4 (March 1980), pp. 9–15) were to be released only by joint agreement of Rea and PREXAD, an agreement reported by Hackleman (*ibid.*, p. 15). Hackleman carefully avoids quoting participants by name. Rea, however, does not hesitate to name names (e.g. Don McAdams, notes 8 and 9, p. 98, with reference to quotes given on p. 85).

Finally, the lack of bibliography and index makes it extremely difficult to locate material in the book. That disadvantage would not be felt so keenly if the book followed a coherent plan of organization. But failing both organization and index, the book presents a headache for researchers.

9. On pp. 199–200 Rea gives his own nine-point summary of the "evidence" as he sees it.

10. The first point is clearly proven: Ellen White did make use of nineteenth century authors in the preparation of her material. The second point as I have stated it is also largely true: gradual disclosure is certainly evident. The third point is much more problematic, for leaders provide what the larger part of the community expects. Culpability is almost impossible to assign.

11. At the root of the difficulty is the desire to clearly distinguish between that which is divine and therefore absolute and that which is human and relative. When Ellen stated that she was, "dependent" on God, she immediately added that the words were her own, i.e., not God's words (*Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 37). But Rea takes this statement to mean that she got all her information from God and nothing from man (p. 52). Her concern, however, was to guard God's reputation, not to eliminate contact with her environment. Rea is quite right, though, when he observes Ellen White putting heavy emphasis on the divine rather than the human element in the inspiration processes.

Rea's tendency to see a dichotomy between the

human and the divine is evident in several passages. He speaks of the "imagination and creative evolution" that went into the development of Ellen White's books and adds: "all of it capable of being done by man not God" (p. 122). In another instance he states that the members were unaware "how substantially helpers other than God" had made Ellen White's writings possible (p. 162).

12. The clearest illustration of Rea's assumption that prophets should not change is found on pp. 71–74 where he discusses the three-stage development of the Conflict of the Ages series. His specific example involves two accounts of Jacob's struggle with the angel. He describes the picture as "almost opposite in its details" (p. 73). A 1943 letter from Arthur White suggested a comparison with the synoptic gospels, to which Rea comments: "the early apologists for Ellen began to sound as if God does not have to be truthful or accurate" (p. 74). Clearly, Rea has not dealt with the remarkable differences between parallel passages in Scripture.

His assumption that a true prophet does not change means that improvement of prophetic writing by whatever means constitutes "damaging evidence" (p. 92). This is the precise phrase he uses even when describing Ellen White's "uncanny ability" to add and delete material "in such a way that the color of the new thread did not clash with the ultimate pattern of the fabric woven through the years" (p. 92).

13. Rea quotes Ron Graybill of the White Estate as saying: "While we have no problem with the fact that Mrs. White did borrow, we do wonder why she appears to have denied her borrowing" (p. 171, citing Graybill's presentation to the AAF Board, November 1981). Graybill's approach to the "cover-up" question is similar to the suggestion that I give in the text.

Any cover-up theory must take Bert Haloviak's research into account. A shortened form of his paper, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily': Background and Aftermath of the 1919 Bible and History Teachers' Conference," originally presented at the meeting of SDA Biblical Scholars in New York City on Nov. 14, 1979, is in this issue of SPECTRUM. Rea briefly mentions Haloviak's paper but gives it no credence. Haloviak quotes one worker who described the 1919 Conference as "the most terrible thing that had ever happened in the history of this denomination" (J. S. Washburn, "An Open Letter to Elder A. G. Daniells and an Appeal to the General Conference," 1922, pp. 28–9, F. M. Wilcox personal collection, Reference Files, J. S. Washburn Folder, General Conference Archives, as cited by Haloviak, p. 1). Haloviak also documents the views of A. T. Jones and John Harvey Kellogg on inspiration. Both of them apparently refused to "interpret" or "explain" the testimonies. They simply "believed" them (see Haloviak, pp. 13–18).

14. Reluctance to come to terms with parallel texts in Scripture (see note 12 above) is understandable. One of my professors at the University of Edinburgh described the collapse of his Christian faith into agnosticism as beginning with his study of parallel accounts of the Gospels.

15. In addition to the problems detailed in note 8, biblical scholars will observe fascinating parallels between Rea's reaction to his data and the nineteenth century reaction to the "critical" study of the Bible. In the nineteenth century, initial reaction to the discovery that the biblical writers used sources was violent. Only after many decades did it become possible for mainstream scholarship to emphasize the finished product as being more meaningful than the bits and pieces. As part of that concern with the finished product, biblical scholars today emphasize the importance of what the author added *and* deleted (redaction criticism). Rea betrays his lack of awareness of modern research methods when he exclaims in evident disbelief that the defenders of Ellen White are finding it significant to study "that which she *didn't* include when she copied" (p. 70).

A second remarkable parallel is Rea's attempt to diminish Ellen White's authority by giving a "natural" medical explanation for her visions (pp. 207–213). The terms "ecstasy" and "catelepsy" cited with reference to Ellen White (p. 210), are the same ones that some scholars would use to describe the prophet Ezekiel (e.g., E. Andrews, "Ecstasy," in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* G. A. Buttrick, ed. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), Vol. II, p. 22.

A third parallel is to be found in the emotive language that some biblical scholars still use to describe the biblical data. Although more common at the height of the critical period, such phenomena are still to be found. A readily accessible example is provided by R. H. Pfeiffer in his article on "Chronicles" in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* Vol. I, pp. 572–580. He speaks of "miraculous interventions" being "freely invented by the author" and refers to "graphic fictitious stories" (p. 574). When describing the Chronicler's omissions (in comparison with the books of Samuel and Kings) he speaks of items being "glibly forgotten" (p. 577). He even refers to one biblical passage (Isa. 44:9–17) as a "viciously unfair caricature" (p. 578). A believer is appalled at such language, and rightly so. Inspired texts are to be treated with reverence. Perhaps Walter Rea's experience can shed some light on the mysterious elements that lead to such intense reactions.

16. Two weaknesses of Rea's book, i.e., the harsh language and the frequent reliance on secondary literature, may not prove a serious distraction among some conservative Christians. Those who describe their Jehovah's Witnesses neighbors as "snakes," as I heard a self-proclaimed "fightin' Baptist" pastor describe them recently, would not be at all offended by Rea's vocabulary. As for scholarship, even Zondervan's 1974 edition of the *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church,* edited by J. D. Douglas, reveals a tendency to rely on secondary literature when describing Adventists. The article "Seventh-day Adventist" contains the following remarkable comment: "When the Adventist message has been proclaimed throughout the world and their church has grown to its predetermined size, then the end of the age will come" (p. 899, article by Robert G. Clouse). The article "Ellen Gould White" is even more notable, for even though birth and death dates are indicated (1827–1915), the final statement reads: "She wrote several volumes dealing with Adventist doctrines, notably *In Defense of the Faith* (1933)" (p. 1043, article by Robert C. Newman). That particular book, published 18 years after Ellen White's death, is actually W. H. Branson's response to D. M. Canright,

certainly the most famous of all former Adventists.

17. My optimism stems from the broad general consensus that was clearly developing at Theological Consultation II (Sept. 30–Oct. 3, 1981). See report in SPECTRUM, Vol. 12, No. 2 (December 1981), pp. 40–52. In my teaching experience, I have found that Ellen White's writings, especially her statements on inspiration in the Introduction to *The Great Controversy* (pp. v–xii) and in *Selected Messages,* Vol. 1 (pp. 13–58), are extremely helpful in contributing to an awareness of the problems and a stabilization of faith.

18. Ellen White, *Selected Message,* Vol. 1, p. 22.

A Believer's History of the Adventist Denomination

C. Mervyn Maxwell. *Tell It to the World: The Story of the Seventh-day Adventists.* Revised Edition. 287 pp., ill. Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1976. $4.95 (paper).

reviewed by Benjamin McArthur

Adventist history, the subject of much recent scholarship, receives further attention in a book by a leading Seventh-day Adventist historian. C. Mervyn Maxwell, professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, gives a lively account of the Advent movement from the call of William Miller in 1831 to the 1901 General Conference session. The nineteenth century was the heroic age of the Seventh-day Adventist church, and Maxwell is at his best when recounting tales of sacrifice and triumph of the pioneers. The book, in fact, is primarily a collection of stories and anecdotes held together by a narrative line and interspersed with theological digressions on Adventist doctrine, such as the sanctuary and the investigative judgment.

Tell It to the World is also a "believer's history." Maxwell writes in the great tradition of Adventist apologetic history, confidently tracing the Providential guidance of the church's leaders. This stance of faith controls both the assumptions and method of the book. And in an interesting way, he shares a common vision with America's New Left historians, who hold that history cannot be a dispassionate quest for some objective truth about the past, but demands commitment. Such history strives to move the reader to action.

Likewise, Maxwell hopes that his history will inspire the believer to greater devotion to the cause of the Third Angel's Message. He assumes a readership that shares his faith, and moves freely between history and theology, using each to support the other. This, of course, was precisely what the Adventist pioneers did, and Maxwell's ability to empathize so completely with the pioneers and to convey their outlook to the reader is a strength of the book.

But even acknowledging the apologetic-polemical genre to be a legitimate form of history, *Tell It to the World* has serious flaws. The book desperately needed a firm editorial hand. Maxwell, well-known as a storyteller, strives for an informal, conversational style, but too often lapses into an irritating sentimentality or a glimpse that undermines confidence in the account, as when he looks at what Adventists owe to other Christians in a distressingly superficial and tendentious survey of Western Christianity.

Further, there is the problem of a tightly compartmentalized view of the relationship of Ellen White's work to that of the official Adventist church leadership. Maxwell gives an evenhanded portrayal of the Adventist patriarchy, willing to point out intelligence and dedication as well as flaws of judgment or character in James White, Uriah Smith, John Harvey Kellogg, A. T. Jones, and others. But to Ellen White he can admit no fault (a prevailing strain in Adventist thought). She stands apart from the institutional battles, ready in moments of crisis to offer inspired counsel. This dichotomized view makes her appear something of a divine troubleshooter rather than an ongoing participant in the decision-making

Benjamin McArthur, a professor of history at Southern Missionary College, Collegedale, Tennessee, received his doctorate in history at the University of Chicago.

arena. She somehow seems above history, and even though Maxwell devotes nearly an entire chapter of human interest sketches to Ellen White, she still comes across less as human being than as icon. Perhaps it is time (if Seventh-day Adventists are secure enough in their concept of inspiration) to examine her in her political role.

For the most part the book adds little to our knowledge of Adventist history. One might have expected more from a man so knowledgeable of the Adventist heritage, yet in two areas the book does reflect recent scholarship and social change. The chapter on health reform mentions the several sources that contributed to the Adventist health teachings, and with a polite bow to feminism, Maxwell devotes a chapter to the "Leading Ladies" of the nineteenth-century church.

Tell It to the World will serve as an able introduction to church history for the Adventist lay person. The serious student, though, must consult Richard Schwarz's recently published denominational history textbook and await the multi-volume *Studies in Adventist History* which is still in preparation.

Parochiaid, Educators, and the Courts

Dale E. Twomley. *Parochiaid and the Courts.* ix + 165 pp., bibl. Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1979. $7.50 (paper).

reviewed by Robert G. Higgins

Twomley anticipates that his readers will be private school administrators who need "to know not only what forms of aid have been allowed or disallowed, but also the rationale for the court's decisions and the legal trends such aid is likely to follow. Limiting his focus to United States Supreme Court decisions through 1978, with a sprinkling of lower court cases, Twomley examines government aid exclusively in the context of primary and secondary schools.

In the first three quarters of the book, Twomley outlines the court's attempts at balancing two competing first amendment requirements—that government avoid the establishment of any religion and that government protect the right of free religious exercise. The courts have resolved this constitutional dilemma by developing a three-part test that is applied on a case-by-case basis: (1) the aid must have a secular purpose; (2) the effect must neither be to encourage nor discourage religion; and (3) the aid must not lead to excessive entanglement between government and religion. By tallying the number of consistent cases and the rank of the court issuing the opinions, the author identifies what he calls legal trends.

For all but the most indomitable administrators, the summary chapter is ample. It should be read, however, with several caveats in mind. First, as the author points out, many state constitutions are more stringent on the question of government aid than the United States Constitution, making Supreme Court rulings less relevant in those states. Second, given the division of the Supreme Court justices on the question of parochial aid, as demonstrated by the combined plurality and majority opinion in *Wolman v. Walter,* 433 U.S. 229 (1977), it is surprising that Twomley ventures to suggest trends at all. In fact, a recent United States Supreme Court case, *Committee for Public Education v. Regan,* 444 U.S. 646 (1980), contravenes Twomley's specific prediction by permitting the state to reimburse private schools for auxiliary services. Finally, contrary to Twomley's suggestion that the Supreme Court is becoming less receptive to all parochial aid programs, the *Regan* case is read by some as marking a shift toward accommodation.

Robert G. Higgins received a bachelor of arts degree from Loma Linda University and a J.D. degree from Willamette University, Salem, Oregon.