

# A Kinder, Gentler Ellen White

## A Review of Herbert Douglass' *Messenger of the Lord*

By Alden Thompson

**M**y passion for the ministry of Ellen White makes me a bad risk for reviewing Herbert Douglass' book,<sup>1</sup> *Messenger of the Lord*. I multiply words and overstate both praise and lament. But the temptation was more than I could bear . . . .

With 603 double-column pages (including front matter and indices), *Messenger* deserves the label "monumental." Its arguments and omissions may anger critics; its assertions may unsettle defenders, but the book will be a benchmark for Ellen White studies as the church continues to explore her role in the church.

The author is a respected elder statesman in Adventism who served as a religion teacher at Pacific Union College and at Atlantic Union College, dean and president at AUC, associate editor of the *Adventist Review*, and book editor at Pacific Press. A published author/editor,<sup>2</sup> Douglass holds degrees from Andrews University and a Th.D. from Pacific School of Religion.

The preface, attributed to "The Board of Trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.," indicates that the book is authorized by the Estate and co-sponsored by the General Conference Department of Education and the Board of Higher Education. It was edited by Kenneth Wood and dedicated to him. Wood, former editor of the *Adventist Review* (1966-1982) has been chair of the White Estate Board of Trustees since 1980.

The book's massive size increases its resource value, but reduces the possibility that it will replace T. H. Jemison's *A Prophet Among You*<sup>3</sup> as a college textbook.<sup>4</sup> Although the table of contents distributes the 47 chapters into eight sections, with an Appendix of 16 items (some documentary, some explanatory), an author's "overview" lists five main sections: I. God's Communication System; II. The Real Ellen White; III. Messenger to the Church; IV. How to Listen to the Messenger; V. Continuing Relevancy of the Messenger.

As a potential textbook, one striking deficiency is the absence of any kind of comprehensive listing of Ellen White's books. Appendix D provides a partial list of Ellen White's visions; I found nothing comparable for her writings.<sup>5</sup>

But the book is more defense than introduction. Thus Douglass tackles a wide range of problems, from "the wicked children God does not love" (p. 59) to "a little domestic wine" (p. 306) and Ellen White's 1882 oyster purchase (p. 315), to mention just a few. The "shut door" looms large, earning a full chapter of a dozen pages plus another 21 pages in the appendices.<sup>6</sup> Throughout, the footnotes are voluminous, often providing valuable content and context.



But if the book is to be a defense of Ellen White, I could wish that it had come closer to her ideal that the "bitterest opponents should be treated with respect and deference," to quote Ellen White's counsel to A. T. Jones.<sup>7</sup> Too often the rhetoric of Ellen White's defenders has betrayed their anger even as they try to keep the critics nameless and faceless. Douglass is not angry. But I do wish he could have moved us a step closer to maturity by respectfully naming the critics and listing their writings.

The book is haunted by the long but largely unnamed shadows from the 1970s and 1980s: Numbers, Ford, and Rea.<sup>8</sup> Science historian, Ronald Numbers, analyzing the nineteenth century historical context of Ellen White's health message, raised questions of originality, literary dependence, and scientific accuracy.<sup>9</sup> Desmond Ford, an Australian Adventist theologian, pressed the question of Ellen White's role as exegete and doctrinal authority.<sup>10</sup>

Walter Rea, long-time Adventist pastor and publisher of Ellen White topical compilations, accused Ellen White of plagiarism.<sup>11</sup> *Messenger's* handling of Rea strikingly illustrates the deliberate plan to ignore the critics. An excerpt from my *Spectrum* review of Rea's *The White Lie* deletes Rea's name without using ellipsis marks, replacing it with a bracketed substitution.<sup>12</sup>

Criticizing for omissions is dangerous business, to be sure; a careful re-reading could uncover missing evidence. But I found myself fervently wishing for an index of Ellen White citations, an index of authors cited, and a full bibliography, all of which would have significantly enhanced the resource value of the book.

In the darker recesses of my mind, I am tempted to think that the modest index and bibliography may have been planned to obscure the omissions. The principle of selection in the "select" bibliography is curious. Unpublished manuscripts

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and doctoral dissertations are included, but no periodical or journal articles. That means no references to *Spectrum*, *Ministry*, or *Adventist Review*.<sup>13</sup>

Also largely ignored is the debate over inspiration, which has intensified since the appearance of my book *Inspiration* in 1991.<sup>14</sup> Whatever the reasons for avoiding that debate, the general approach in *Messenger* is clear: filter out virtually all voices deemed to be “critical” of Ellen White.<sup>15</sup> The notable and remarkable exception is the handling of the “shut door” controversy. Appendix L is a blow-by-blow catalog: “Chief Charges Against Ellen White Regarding the Shut-door Issue and the Responses Through the Years.” That would have been an excellent model for handling other major issues as well.

Given the striking omissions from the bibliography, some of the additions are even more surprising. Are the three books by Norman Cousins<sup>16</sup> more pertinent than the relevant periodical literature? But maybe Cousins is more symptomatic than most of us care to admit, symbolized perhaps in the subtitle of one of his books, *The Biology of Hope*. In our attempts to defend Ellen White, are we simply being “hopeful,” optimistic in the classic American sense, making her into what we wish her to be? We don’t really want her to be a hard-hitting, time-related prophet. We want her to be nice, gentle, and attractive — a younger, fresher Ellen White, like the picture on the cover of Douglass’ book, or like the almost sensuous Harry Anderson rendition on the brochure accompanying *The Published Ellen G. White Writings on Compact Disc* (1990-1994). If Jack Blanco’s *Clear Word*<sup>17</sup> can transform a raging and irrational King Saul into a joyous participant in worship at the school of the prophets (1 Samuel 19:19-24), if an official Mormon publication can turn Brigham Young into a monogamist<sup>18</sup>, can’t we make Ellen White into what we would like her to be? I sense that yearning for a nice Ellen White in Leo Van Dolson’s *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* when he says, “What a pleasant surprise it is to learn how human, even

fun-loving, Ellen White was. She was a pleasant, happy person to be around.” Interestingly enough, the comment appears under the heading, “Testing the Prophetic Gift.”<sup>19</sup>

It is in connection with that tendency to idealize Ellen White that I have read Douglass with a great deal of interest. Have we come clean? Do we have a model that will enable the church to deal with all that we know about Ellen White? Not quite. But in important ways Douglass moves us in the right direction.

Perhaps most importantly, in spite of lingering skirmishes, he has stepped away from inerrancy and infallibility.<sup>20</sup> If the book can help break the stranglehold of inerrancy in Adventism, it could be a great blessing.

Toward that end, several of his ideas are worth exploring. First, his “ellipse of truth” is an attempt to push paradoxes toward integration, to join “twin truths.”<sup>21</sup> Chapter 22 lists 16 pairs under the heading of “The Great Controversy Theme” (e.g., “repentance and reformation”; “believing in Christ and abiding in Him”). Maintaining two focal points instead of one

“If we follow Ellen White’s lead and recognize that ‘God and heaven alone are infallible,’ then all human formulations of doctrine fall short of the absolute . . .”

would protect against all-or-nothing thinking and help integrate seemingly contradictory elements. “Ellipse” is too abstract a label to have a chance. But his intent is clear. Douglass is understandably allergic to “contradiction”<sup>22</sup>— the word has been too much anathematized in conservative circles. But a (renamed) ellipse has potential for reducing the gnawing fears that haunt many devout believers.

Second, one of Douglass’ specific applications of the ellipse concept unites what he calls the objective and the subjective, perhaps the beginning of a bridge between the theocentric (objective) Calvinists with their emphasis on the sovereignty and grace of God and the anthropocentric (subjective) Arminian Methodists with their emphasis on human freedom and responsibility. Adventism has suffered much over that tension; it may have been the real issue in the Ford controversy, with “objec-



tive" Ford pointing to the sovereignty and grace of God and the "subjective" Douglass and Wood pointing to the freedom and responsibility of humankind. Perhaps the remarkable absence of Ford's name from the book finds its remarkable and healing counterpart in the absence of the perfectionist writings of Douglass and Wood. That Douglass' "harvest principle" is missing is particularly noteworthy.<sup>23</sup> Is it possible that these two elder statesmen in Adventism, Wood and Douglass, have listened more carefully to Ellen White and have stepped back from the controversies of the 1970s and 1980s so that her writings might inspire and unite Adventists, rather than condemn and divide? I think Ellen White would have liked that.

Third, the words "time-related" instead of "time conditioned," terminology Douglass credits to Rolf Poehler in his work on the shut door,<sup>24</sup> could help move the church toward a more realistic assessment of how God acts within history.

The last point may be particularly crucial. For if the Lord's messengers really are "time-related," then time and setting are crucial. The point is well illustrated by Douglass' careful treatment of Ellen White's move from shut to open door. Given his opposition to "contradiction" (e.g., pp. 31, 403, 458), his statements that Ellen White rejected "theological errors" (p. 503), avoided "erroneous concepts" (p. 461), and his position that "New truths do not make old truths obsolete" (p. 531), a disinterested observer might say that his treatment of the shut door gives away the store.

I don't think so; but he does need to bring his rhetoric into line with his arguments and the evidence. If we follow Ellen White's lead and recognize that "God and heaven alone are infallible,"<sup>25</sup> then all human formulations of doctrine fall short of the absolute: "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. He meets fallen human beings where they are."<sup>26</sup>

Following the lead of Ellen White, Douglass has made the important move away from inspired words. But he has landed on inspired "thoughts"—which can be almost as troublesome as the words—unless one has a strong doctrine of divine condescension. But Douglass wavers on that point. My preference is to follow Ellen White's lead further and move from inspired word to inspired person: "The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not

like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen..."

"It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself . . ."<sup>27</sup>

If the "person" is inspired, then God is free to work through the "degenerate senses" to lead that person and the people where they need

to go. That means more than just growth, it means change: from shut door to open door. The prophets are not God, and they are not above the fray. They will be a step ahead of the people, but not much more than that or the people won't be able to follow.

The models of "inspiration" bequeathed us by evangelicals and fundamentalists are inadequate for the task because they simply focus on correct information; models proposed by the secularists and rationalists are likewise inadequate because they deny God's involvement in human activity. But if we adopt the moral foundation laid down by Jesus in His two great commands, allowing it to be further structured by the decalogue, then we see how every thought and deed must somehow "hang" on these great moral imperatives: love to God and

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love to humankind (Matthew 22:35-40). Ellen White's explicit statements on inspiration point to such a moral/ethical model and, unless we are afraid, it makes room for whatever she has written, "time-related" as it inevitably will be. Adventists have a model that allows us to be honest with God and with the evidence. We've just been too frightened to get there easily.

Fortunately, Ellen White herself pointed to a model which allows for change. And our current (1980) statement of fundamental beliefs comes close to predicting it, declaring in the preamble that "Revision of these statements may be expected. . ."<sup>28</sup> Douglass often lays out the evidence for change, but his love of a gentle Ellen White and his fear of contradiction still tempt him to be selective.

I will admit, for example, that I was looking for the one quotation from the *Testimonies* that stands out in my mind as vividly as any other. It is an 1856 quote found on p. 137 of volume one: "As soon as any have a desire to imitate the fashions of the world, that they do not immediately subdue, just so soon God ceases to acknowledge them as His children." It belongs with the discussion of the 1860 quote, "Wicked children God does not love" (pp. 59-61), but I did not find it in Douglass. He fearlessly presents the later "contradictory" statement from *Signs of the Times*, February 15, 1892: "Do not teach your children that God does not love them when they do wrong...." But his explanation simply imposes the kinder, gentler 1892 statement on the 1860 letter, thus blurring the stark "time-relatedness" of the earlier quote.

Ellen White's language of "spiritual unity" and "underlying harmony" enables us more readily to trace the movement toward the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The kinder, gentler God wins in the end; but we don't have to remodel anything en route. "No one can improve the Bible by suggesting what the Lord meant to say or ought to have said," Ellen White wrote.<sup>29</sup> Good words, those.

Now that the White Estate has moved toward full disclosure, the need for an adequate model is more urgent. The *Published Ellen G. White Writings on Compact Disc* does not include dates. It should — and Douglass perhaps inadvertently reveals why, explaining that when *Steps to Christ* was first published by the non-Adventist publisher, Fleming Revell, the opening chapter, "God's Love for Man" was not included, but was added for a new edition in 1892 (p. 445).

From George Knight's *Meeting Ellen White* (p. 110), I discovered that the words "God is love" are the great pillars on which the Conflict series is hung, the first three words in *Patriarchs and Prophets* and the last three in *The Great Controversy*. Intrigued, I picked up *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 1 (1858) and carefully read through Ellen White's 200-page portrayal of the controversy in that early publication (pp. SG 1:17-219). "God is love" is not there. Check the EGW disc. It's amazing.

Amazing, yes, but not frightening, at least not for me. For I, too, have tasted the great joy that comes from discovering that Jesus came as God in the flesh. And it came late for me, too. I was a fourth generation Adventist in the second year of seminary when John 14-17 came home to my heart.<sup>30</sup>

Douglass' book will be good for us. And I must say that I was encouraged by his choice of sources in his final paragraphs: quotes from the current General Conference President Robert Folkenberg, from the sometimes-vilified former General Conference President Arthur G. Daniells of 1919 Bible Conference fame, and from Jack Provonsha's *Remnant in Crisis*.<sup>31</sup> Provonsha's book makes the "Select Bibliography," too. That's a good note on which to end.

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## Notes and References

1. Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1998).

2. The book itself says little about Douglass. The "Select Bibliography" only lists one of his own books: *The End* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1979) and one which he edited, *What Ellen White Has Meant to Me* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1973). One of his best-known contributions to denominational literature was as co-author (with Edward Heppenstall, Hans K. Larondelle, and Mervyn Maxwell) of *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1975).

3. Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1955.

4. A more likely candidate for undergraduate usage is George Knight's Review and Herald trilogy, *Meeting Ellen White* (1996), *Reading Ellen White* (1997), and *The World of Ellen White* (1998).

5. The inside covers of both Jemison and the three-volume *Index to the Writings of E. G. White* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1962-1963) feature a schematic chart, "Development of the Ellen G. White Books, 1844-1911." A generation knowing little about Ellen White's writings needs that kind of help. In Douglass, only chapters 39 and 40, some 20 pages, are dedicated directly to the preparation of her books.

6. Chapter 44. Nine of the sixteen Appendices (E through M) are dedicated to shut-door topics.

7. *Testimonies for the Church* vol. 6:122.

8. Behind the largely unnamed major critics is a significant history which goes unnoticed in Douglass. Early issues of *Spectrum* played a key role in focusing attention on Ellen White's literary borrowing. In 1970, William Peterson implied that the use of lesser or erroneous authorities calls into question the prophet's inspiration and authority ("A Textual and Historical Study of Ellen White's Account of the French Revolution," *Spectrum* 2:4 [Autumn 1970], 57-69). The dialogue continued over several issues, but the definitive response came from Ronald Graybill who demonstrated that Ellen White didn't borrow from lesser authorities, but from Uriah Smith ("How Did Ellen White Choose and Use Historical Authorities?" *Spectrum* 4:3 [Summer 1972]:49-53).

Ironically, closer attention to Ellen White's own statements about her use of sources and quotations would have pointed in the right direction. In the "Introduction" to *The Great Controversy*, she states: "In some cases where a historian has so grouped together events as to afford, in brief, a comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted; but except in a few instances, no specific credit has been given, since the quotations are not given for the purpose of citing that writer as authority, but because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject."

Most pertinent to Peterson's critique is the concluding sentence: "In narrating the experience and views of those carrying forward the work of reform in our own time, similar use has occasionally been made [1911: similar use has been

made] of their published works." Note the two bracketed changes between 1888 and 1911, both moving in the direction of more candid disclosure.

As one of my students spontaneously exclaimed after reading how she used her sources: "That's illegal!" By modern academic standards, yes—but more innocently illegal than sometimes allowed by her critics.

9. Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976). A revised and enlarged edition was published by the University of Tennessee Press (Knoxville, 1992). The first edition is cited in Douglass' select bibliography, but not the second. In the main body of the book, I found two references to Numbers in the footnotes (p. 285), each citing him as an authority on 19th century health conditions, not as a critic of Ellen White. Without mentioning Numbers' name, one footnote cites *A Critique of Prophetess of Health* (1976) the White Estate response to Numbers (p. 498). In Appendix L, Numbers is mentioned by name in the survey of "shut door" critics (p. 565-66).

Douglass rightly places the emphasis on Ellen White's health principles, rather than on the details. And when

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it comes to science, Douglass is headed in the right direction when he lets the prophet off the hook for incomplete information: "Prophets are not called to update encyclopedias or dictionaries... If prophets are to be held to the highest standards of scientific accuracy (every few years these 'standards' change, even for the experts), we would have cause to reject Isaiah for referring to 'the four corners of the earth' (Isaiah 11:12)" (p. 490).

But in actual practice, examples of "new" light are easier to handle than reversal of the "old." The astronomy vision which convinced Bates (p. 491) and the 1863 health vision which reversed Ellen White's earlier (1858) stance on pork (pp. 157-158; cf. *Testimonies* 1:206, 207 [1862]) fit this pattern nicely. But her statement that "phrenology and mesmerism are very much exalted. They are good in their place..." (*Testimonies* 1:296 [1862]) is simply overlaid with the 1884 "correction" that "the sciences that treat of the human mind are... good in their place" (*Signs of the Times*, Nov. 6, 1884). Douglass suggests "printer's error" for the earlier statement. "More probably," he continues, "it was a general statement, corrected later, that reflected the commonly used terms for psychology in the mid-nineteenth century" (pp. 389-390; cf. also pp. 494-95). The same reluctance to admit scientific error is found in the discussion of her comments on volcanoes (pp. 492-493) and wigs (p. 495).

In 1963, the third volume of the *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen White* included an Appendix E, "Helpful Points in the Interpretation and Use of the Ellen G. White Writings" (pp. 3211-3216). Point 7 is "Recognize that the counsels are scientifically sound." Douglass has backed away from that point-blank confidence, but still ends up holding the prophet hostage to science.

10. At Pacific Union College, on October 27, 1979, at a meeting sponsored by the Association of Adventist Forums, Ford, on temporary assignment at PUC, expressed his conviction "that there is no biblical way of proving the investigative judgment." He also declared that Ellen White's role in the church should be "pastoral, not canonical."

The audience was sharply polarized as was the church at large. He was given a six-month paid leave to prepare his defense. After the Glacier View Sanctuary Review Committee, August 10-15, 1980, Ford's ministerial credentials were removed. His published

defense is entitled: *Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment* (Cassleberry, Fla.: Evangelion Press, 1980).

While not conceding any doctrinal points, Douglass states his view of Ellen White's role in a bold-faced section heading: "Primarily a Commentator, Not an Exegete." Within that section, he is even more blunt: "She never expected anyone to consider her the Bible's infallible commentator or interpreter" (p. 419).

11. Rea published his allegations as *The White Lie* (Turlock, Calif.: M & R Publications, 1982). Interestingly enough, in spite of the furor caused by Rea's material, Douglass says relatively little about Ellen White's use of sources. In contrast with Warren Johns' cluster of articles in *Ministry* (June 1982, pp. 5-19), *Messenger* includes no visuals illustrating Ellen White's borrowing or her use of sources.

12. *Spectrum* 12:4 (June 1982): 51. The original quote reads: "The 'cover-up' argument is clearly the most difficult for conservative believers to handle. 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'..." Douglass' footnote replaces "Rea's experience" with "[the experience of such believers]" (p. 464).

13. To cite just one example of the disadvantages of the selection procedure: Bert Haloviak's unpublished article, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily': Background and Aftermath of the 1919 Bible and History Teachers Conference" is listed in the bibliography and deserves to be because it is more comprehensive than the shorter piece published in *Spectrum* 12:4 (June 1982), pp. 19-34. But the more accessible (and still comprehensive!) *Spectrum* article is not mentioned.

14. Alden Thompson, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest*

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*Answers* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1991). In his Acknowledgments (p. xi), Douglass graciously credits me as one of his conversation partners. Footnotes (pp. 75, 457, 463) mention my five-part series, "From Sinai to Golgotha" (*Adventist Review*, December 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, 1981; with follow-up response, July 1, 1982), published while Kenneth Wood was editor of *Adventist Review*. The additional article on the investigative judgment ("Even the Investigative Judgment Can Be Good News," *Westwind* [Walla Walla College alumni journal], Winter, 1982, 4-7, 11) is not mentioned. Douglass also notes (123) my four-part series on inspiration in the *Adventist Review* ("Adventists and Inspiration," September 5, 12, 19, 26, 1985), the forerunner of *Inspiration* which elicited the invitation from Review and Herald to write the book. But the book itself is not mentioned. The Adventist Theological Society's response to my book, Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson, eds., *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society, 1992), is cited once in a note (p. 23) but not as part of the debate. And there is no reference to Samuel Koranteng-Pipim's *Receiving the Word* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Berean Books, 1996).

15. In a handful of instances, *Spectrum* is cited in the notes, but never in a way that could be construed as being critical of Ellen White. When the 1919 Bible Conference minutes are mentioned, the *Spectrum* edition (10:1 [May 1979], pp. 23-57) is sometimes referenced in the footnotes (pp. 191, 424, 442-443, 525), but not always (e.g., 441, note #2). I found footnote references to three other *Spectrum* articles: on p. 227, Jonathan Butler, "Ellen G. White and the Chicago Mission" (Winter, 1970); on p. 453, Donald R. McAdams, "Shifting Views of Inspiration: Ellen G. White Studies in the 1970s" (March 1980); and on p. 464, my review of Walter Rea's *The White Lie*, "The Imperfect Speech of Inspiration" (June 1982), but with all references to Rea removed. See note #12 above.

16. *Anatomy of an Illness* (1979); *Head First: The Biology of Hope* (1989); *The Healing Heart* (1984).

17. Jack J. Blanco, *The Clear Word [Bible]*, Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald [printer and distributor], 1994). To indicate more clearly that *The Clear Word* is devotional commentary rather than Scripture, "Bible" was dropped from later editions.

18. Associated Press column by Vern Anderson, cited in the *Walla Walla Union Bulletin*, May 17, 1998. Reference is made to a new "official" Mormon Relief Society "lesson manual" which tells the story of Brigham Young. According to the manual, Brigham Young had one wife instead of 55.

19. "Studies on Revelation and Inspiration: God Shows and Tells," *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, First Quarter, 1999 (Lesson 8, Tuesday, February 16, 1999).

20. See, for example, pp. 376, 419, 470, 519. But Douglass is not as blunt as George Knight is with his title for chapter 17 in *Reading Ellen White*: "Realize that Inspiration Is Not Infallible, Inerrant, or Verbal" (pp. 105-112).

21. His primary discussion is found in chapter 22, "The Organizing Theme," pp. 260-263 and in Appendix P, pp. 573-575. A diagram on p. 575 illustrates the use of the "ellipse" in

connection with both Soteriology and Atonement.

22. See, e.g., pp. 31, 403, 458.

23. An eschatological approach to perfection based on Ellen White's comment in *Christ's Object Lesson*, p. 69: "When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own." Douglass develops the idea in "Men of Faith — The Showcase of God's Grace," *Perfection* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1975), 9-56.

24. Rolf Poehler, "'...And the Door was Shut' — Seventh-day Adventists and the Shut-Door Doctrine in the Decade after the Great Disappointment," unpublished paper, Andrews University, 1978. See discussion in Douglass, 501-502, 510 [note #13], and 550-552.

25. See p. 501, citing *Review and Herald*, April 15, 1880.

26. From "Search the Scriptures," *Review and Herald*, July 26, 1892; published in *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 37 (1946).

27. Letter 121, 1901; published in *Selected Messages* 1:22 (1958).

28. It is revealing that the preamble was completely omitted from the first edition of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . . A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines*, published by the Ministerial Association of the General Conference in 1988. The third printing (March 1989) includes the preamble in the front matter (p. iv).

29. Manuscript 16, 1888; published in *Selected Messages*, 1:22 (1958)

30. The issue of Trinity is crucial to the discussion and is now cropping up in official Adventist publications as well as in the literature of the independents. The *Adventist Review* of December 25, 1997, published an excerpt from an 1872 article from Ellen White (*Review and Herald*, December 17, 1872) with contrasting ideas represented in the first and last sentences. A letter published in the February 26 issue put it this way: "Help! I need a theologian. What is the true status of God the Son in His relationship to God the Father? In 'The First Advent of Christ,' the first sentence states: 'The Son of God was next in authority to the great Lawgiver.' The last sentence describes Christ as 'the Majesty of heaven, equal with God.'"

The editors commented: "Your question is too important to attempt an answer here. But we'll keep it in mind for possible future treatment." Important indeed. And volatile.

On the independent front, one newsletter (*The End Times*, April 1998) printed an inquiry asking about the Trinity. The editors commented: "You are correct in that the Doctrine of the Trinity is a Roman Catholic doctrine, rejected by the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church, but now fully accepted by the leadership and foisted on the laity."

31. Jack Provonsha, *Remnant in Crisis* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1993).