

THE BIBLICAL FICTION OF

Ellen WHITE

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Among the hundreds of published works by Ellen White,¹ her writings on parts of the Bible are probably the best known and the most beloved by those devoted to her work.



Although she often wrote biblical narratives, expositions, and religious materials in periodical articles and special-purpose manuscripts, she is most recognized in this regard for her books that explore large swaths of the Old and New Testaments. She published such books throughout her long career, starting with *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1² in 1858 and concluding with *Prophets and Kings*,³ posthumously⁴ published in 1917.⁵ The earliest of these was very selective in

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its biblical topics; the subsequent volumes became increasingly more comprehensive.

Despite White's cautionary warnings,⁶ many who read these works consider them to be divinely inspired commentaries on the biblical texts and materials they explore and take her interpretations and applications to be authoritative. Although it contains a similar disclaimer, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief 18, "Gift of Prophecy," seems to provide support for this common assessment of White's biblical interpretations:

The Scriptures testify that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and we believe it was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.⁷

Notwithstanding common Adventist practices or official credal statements, how should we assess White's writings on biblical materials? Let us first examine the self-understanding of those who worked on these writings or, at least, one of the most cherished of them, *The Desire of Ages (DA)*.⁸

While working on *DA*, White's literary assistants discussed the plan and challenges of the project, including this from Marion Davis:

Whatever plan we follow, there is much work to be done if the book [*Desire of Ages*] is finished at all as it should be. Considering that the very cream has been taken from a large part of the old book [*The Spirit of Prophecy*], and has been put into everybody's hands, it seems a pity that this new work should have nothing fresh for many of its most important chapters. It seems a pity too, that the most important part of the book should be the part to be hurried and slighted. Again, the chapters as they stand in the old book need a thorough revision and rearrangement for the new. You know what criticisms this will excite. If we can add fresh matter it will help the case. I do not write these things to complain of difficulties, but because I think, so far as possible, we should understand the situation just as it is.⁹

This recommenced model prevailed in the final assembling and publication of *DA*, as acknowledged in the Preface by the "Publishers":

In the following pages the author, a woman of large and deep and long experience in the things of God, has set forth new beauties from the life of Jesus. She has brought many new gems from the precious casket. She opens before the reader undreamed-of riches from this infinite treasure house. New and glorious light flashes forth from many a familiar passage, the depth of which the reader supposed he had long before fathomed.¹⁰

This begs the question: what do these recommendations and post-publication descriptions mean? No doubt, both refer only to the addition of "fresh" and "new" ideas, insights, and observations not found in the immediately preceding volumes in White's "life of Christ" published material, i.e., *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vols. 2-3. (The 4-volume set covered the Gospels in all of vol. 2 and part of vol. 3, the first 18 of 36 chapters.) To determine if the author and her editors achieved this objective and for other reasons that will emerge below, I have randomly selected one of the chapters of *DA* that Fred Veltman analyzed in his massive study of literary dependency in White's writings on the life of Christ:¹¹ chapter 46, "He Was Transfigured."

This chapter exhibits evidence of "fresh" and "new" material compared to the comparable material in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2 (*2SP*).¹² *DA*'s chapter with 1,846 words is 10.87 percent longer than the 1,665-word Transfiguration material in *2SP*. More importantly, *DA*, ch. 46 includes some specific "fresh" and "new" material not found in *2SP*. Although many of these additions are relatively unimportant,¹³ I consider some to be significant, including:

- An allusion to Enoch is included in material about Elijah.
- The understanding of Michael as Christ is evident in the story of Moses' resurrection.
- The disciples longed to stay in the glorious presence of the special visitors, leading Peter to propose setting up the three tents.
- Jesus' divinity flashed through his humanity.
- Moses and Elijah are called heavenly beings.
- Jesus is said to be clothed with heaven's light as he will be in the Parousia.
- Only the three disciples who were later afforded the

most intimate roles in Gethsemane were permitted to participate in the Transfiguration.

- Through the Transfiguration, Jesus was seeking to gain a fresh hold on his omnipotence.
- Included are long expansions and exhortations on the disciples' ignorance and the ancient roles of Moses and Elijah.
- In addition, some changes in *DA*, ch. 46 involve removing things found in *2SP*.¹⁴

The recommendations and comments by those involved in the production of *DA* and the evidence of their impact on the final product may lead one to think that this additive approach was unique to that book in the trajectory of White's writing on "the life of Christ." Nothing could be further from the truth. The first volume in this development, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1 (*1SG*), has a chapter titled "The Transfiguration." Veltman rightly determined that only 11 of its 51 sentences¹⁵ directly concern the related biblical narrative in the Synoptic Gospels. The other 40 sentences consist of background information

about the prior experiences of Moses and Elijah.

As we noted, the Transfiguration material in *2SP* consists of 1,665 words. The comparable material in *1SG* is 957 words. However, the word count of the Transfiguration material in *2SP* is not only 73.98 percent longer than that of *1SG*, but the later volume also has an enormous amount of material not found in the earlier book. Therefore, the plan for *DA* to include "fresh" and "new" material was not new. Even if it was not stated as such, the result was the same with *2SP* vs. *1SG*. In fact, this expansion was far more extensive and significant than that of *DA* vs. *2SP*. However, this claim has much more to do with other data, as we shall see.

Thus far, we have examined the size of the narrative coverage among the three books in White's trajectory of the life of Christ, through the evidence of her writing on the Synoptic Gospels' story of the Transfiguration. We found that there was a massive expansion between *1SG* and *2SP* and a modest expansion between *2SP* and *DA*. However, to really understand the nature of White's writing on the life of Christ we must explore the

Mark 9:2-8

²And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. ³And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. ⁴And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. ⁶For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. ⁷And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. ⁸And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

Matthew 17:1-8

¹And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, ²And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. ³And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. ⁴Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. ⁵While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. ⁶And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. ⁷And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. ⁸And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

Luke 9:28-36

²⁸And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. ²⁹And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. ³⁰And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: ³¹Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. ³³And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. ³⁴While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. ³⁵And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. ³⁶And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

relationship of her writing in the three books to the biblical narratives in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.¹⁶ To facilitate this, I first provide these three Synoptic accounts according to the *King James Version* (KJV),¹⁷ with Mark's account listed first.¹⁸ [See previous page.]

Here is Mark's account—the earliest version of the story—according to the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV), a modern translation, with my notes on the differences in Matthew and Luke:¹⁹

Six days later,²⁰ Jesus took with him Peter and James and John,²¹ and led them up a high mountain²² apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them,²³ and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.²⁴ And²⁵ there appeared to them²⁶ Elijah with Moses,²⁷ who were talking with Jesus.²⁸ Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi,²⁹ it is good for us to be here;³⁰ let us³¹ make three dwellings,³² one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He did not know what to say,³³ for they were terrified. Then a cloud³⁴ overshadowed them,³⁵ and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved;³⁶ listen to him!”³⁷ Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.³⁸

Most of the variations in Matthew and Luke are minor and not significant to the meaning of the narrative. However, several are noteworthy. Some of Luke's edits are especially important as reflections of his understanding of the event:

- Jesus' reason for the mountain hike was to pray.
- Moses and Elijah spoke to Jesus about the latter's forthcoming experience in Jerusalem.

Others are interesting but less important:

- The disciples were sleepy but stayed awake and saw the two visitors.
- As the visitors were leaving, Peter suggested building the dwellings.
- The disciples told no one about this at the time.

Some of Matthew's edits are also significant, especially concerning his assessment of Peter's importance:³⁹



Pietro Perugino, *Transfiguration of Christ*, 1496-1500. Wood engraving after a fresco, in Collegio del Cambio, Perugia, Italy.

- Peter declared that he would build the dwellings.⁴⁰
- Matthew leaves out the reference to Peter not knowing what to say.

Also note these additions that seem to feature Jesus' kind concern for the disciples:⁴¹

- After hearing the voice from the cloud, the disciples fell to the ground from fear.
- Jesus touched the prostrate disciples and told them to get up and to not be afraid.

Let us examine the integrity of White's three portrayals and discussions of the Transfiguration narrative in the Synoptic Gospels. The first, *1SG*, as we noted above, devotes only 11 sentences (237 words) to this specific narrative. This is so brief that we can include it here in its entirety:

I saw that the faith of the disciples was greatly strengthened at the transfiguration. God chose to give the followers of Jesus strong proof that he was the promised Messiah, that in their bitter sorrow and disappointment they should

not entirely cast away their confidence. At the transfiguration the Lord sent Moses and Elias to talk with Jesus concerning his sufferings and death. Instead of choosing angels to converse with his Son, God chose those who had an experience in the trials of earth. A few of his followers were permitted to be with him and behold his face lighted up with divine glory, and witness his raiment white and glistening, and hear the voice of God, in fearful majesty, saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him.⁴²

At the transfiguration this promise was fulfilled. The fashion of Jesus' countenance was changed, and shone like the sun. His raiment was white and glistening. Moses was present, and represented those who will be raised from the dead at the second appearing of Jesus. And Elias, who was translated without seeing death, represented those who will be changed to immortality at Christ's second coming, and without seeing death will be translated to heaven. The disciples beheld with fear and astonishment the excellent majesty of Jesus, and the cloud that overshadowed them, and heard the voice of God in terrible majesty; saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him.

Despite the brevity of White's initial account of the Transfiguration, there are already abundant examples in 1SG of her departure from the biblical account, loosely understood as material found in Matthew, Mark, or Luke. These extrabiblical additions include:

- The disciples' faith was strengthened at the Transfiguration.
- God gave proof of Jesus as the Messiah.
- The Lord sent Moses and Elijah.
- God chose those with trial experiences.
- God's promise was fulfilled at the Transfiguration.
- Moses represented the raised dead at the Parousia.
- Elijah represented the translated ones at the Parousia.

All of this occurs in 11 sentences! Furthermore, her 40 sentences on Moses and Elijah also constitute a major addition to the Transfiguration narrative.

White's practice of augmenting the biblical account(s) of the Transfiguration exhibited in 1SG is dwarfed by her widespread, wholesale expansion of narrative details in 2SP's corresponding material. Word count alone shows this: 1,665 words (2SP) vs. 957 (1SG).⁴³

Of course, I will not reproduce this extensive 2SP material here. Instead, I provide a list of the extrabiblical details added to the account of the Transfiguration in 2SP:

- The event occurred as the sun was setting, fading on the mountain tops.
- Jesus and the disciples left a noisy town, went across the fields, and traveled up the steep side of the mountain.
- Jesus sought the high elevation to get away from the crowds.
- He went not only to pray but also to meditate.
- He and the disciples were tired.
- The disciples wondered what was happening but asked no questions.
- The event occurred in the darkness of night.
- Jesus spent hours in prayer with tears.
- He prayed for grace on his disciples.
- The dew of heaven was on his bowed form.
- The night shadows were around him.
- At first the disciples also prayed.
- Jesus had warned them of his future sufferings.
- He prayed that the disciples would see his divinity.
- God heard his prayer.
- The golden gates of the City of God were thrown open.
- Jesus displayed God-like majesty.
- His garments were coarse and soiled.
- The disciples believed that Elijah's presence signaled the nearness of Jesus' earthly kingdom.
- Peter had forgotten Jesus' frequent explanations of the plan of salvation.
- The cloud was brighter than the one that led Israel.
- The voice from the cloud caused the mountain to tremble.

This list represents the state of Ellen White's trajectory in writing on the life of Christ in general and specifically on the Transfiguration story. As we noted above, she and her editors were contemplating the final stage in the trajectory—*The Desire of Ages*—with a plan to add “fresh” and “new” ideas, insights, and observations not found in 2SP.

We have already reviewed examples of such material in *DA* compared to 2SP. We must now examine the extrabiblical material in *DA*, ch. 46, “He Was Transfigured,” that was not in the massive amount of such material already in 2SP. In other words, what “fresh” and “new” extrabiblical material does this chapter include?

As this chapter is also too large to reproduce, here is a list of the unique, extrabiblical details in the *DA* Transfiguration chapter that I have selected from the larger list of additions provided above:

- The disciples longed to stay in the glorious presence of the special visitors, leading Peter to propose setting up the three tents.
- Jesus' divinity flashed through his humanity.
- Moses and Elijah are called heavenly beings.
- Jesus is said to be clothed with heaven's light as he will be in the Parousia.
- Only the three disciples who were later afforded the most intimate roles in Gethsemane were permitted to participate in the Transfiguration.
- Through the Transfiguration, Jesus was seeking to gain a fresh hold on his omnipotence.

This shows that, while *DA* continued to add extrabiblical details to White's narration of the Transfiguration story, it did so far more limitedly than did *2SP*. However, her whole trajectory of writing on this story exhibits a massive amount of expansionary details added to the biblical account(s).

What was Ellen White's authority for doing this? The simple answer is that she never addressed this question. However, we may observe a few things from the material itself. In *1SG* she used the expression "I saw" three times in the chapter on the Transfiguration—once in the 11 sentences on the event itself and twice when ruminating on the earlier experiences of Moses and Elijah. She seems, thereby, to imply that she "saw" these things in vision. The one use of "I saw" in the specific Transfiguration material is in the first sentence of the chapter: "I saw that the faith of the disciples was greatly strengthened at the transfiguration." Although this is the first sentence and may be argued to reference the whole chapter, it more likely seems limited to the immediate observation that follows; she claims that she simply "saw" something about the disciple's faith being strengthened through this event. The fact that she used the expression "I saw" twice when discussing Moses and Elijah suggests that her use of the expression in this context must be read in close connection to what immediately follows and not as a comprehensive remark relating to the whole paragraph, section, or chapter.⁴⁴

More significantly, we learn from Veltman's monumental study of White's writing on the life of Christ that she extensively incorporated extrabiblical, narrative, and devotional material from contemporary "lives of Christ" commentaries, and other works available to her.

Although Veltman focused on a selection of chapters in *DA*, he extended his investigation to include her internal source materials—her earlier books and other writings on the life of Christ. He often found that her literary dependence was more extensive in these earlier, internal sources than in *DA*.

Fortunately, we do not have to speculate about this for chapter 46 because this was one of the chapters that Veltman analyzed. Just as the above findings show, he concluded, "The question of expansion is more aptly applied to the enlarged *SP* text over the former *SG* text, than to the *DA* text."⁴⁵ Veltman found that 38 of the 88 sentences (42.7 percent) in this *DA* chapter exhibited "some degree of literary dependency."⁴⁶ Most of this dependence was already evident in the corresponding chapter in *2SP*. In Veltman's words, "Since the content of the *DA* text is for the most part a revision of the *SP* account it is not surprising to find the same sources being used in generally the same way. The earlier text is often found to be either equal to or more dependent than the later *DA* text."⁴⁷

Veltman found that 48 of the 88 sentences (53.94 percent) in this *DA* chapter were "independent,"⁴⁸ (did not exhibit literary dependency). I examined these 48 sentences and concluded that 24 of them (50 percent) included additions to the biblical narrative. I also looked at Veltman's 38 "dependent" sentences and found that 26 of these (68.4 percent) showed evidence of additions to the biblical narrative. When combined, these 50 independent and dependent sentences that include additions to the narrative amount to 56.82 percent of the 88 sentences in the chapter. Of course, as we have seen, many of Veltman's dependent sentences reflect the dependence already established in *2SP*. Nevertheless, these findings demonstrate that White was engaged in a massive inflation of extrabiblical, narrative details in her multi-decade, published discussion of the Synoptic Gospels' story of the Transfiguration.

In addition to the above 50 narrative expansions, in this chapter White also adds background details outside the narrative in five dependent and 18 independent sentences, as well as devotional or homiletical details outside the narrative in five dependent and six independent sentences. Together with the 50 sentences of narrative additions, the total number of sentences that involve all types of expansions to the biblical narrative of the Transfiguration amounts to 84 of the 88 sentences in this *DA* chapter. However, Veltman identified the Bible as the source of three dependent sentences in this chapter.

I found that one of these provided added background material. In sum, I found that of the 88 sentences in this chapter, 82 (93.18 percent) exhibit some type of expansion of the biblical text—narrative additions, background items, or devotional material.

After reviewing and analyzing the evidence concerning *DA*, the best-known example of Ellen White's biblical writings, how should we understand the classification and literary genre of these writings?

Especially regarding *DA* and her other writings on Jesus, we should locate her writings within the context of the 19th century. That century saw an explosion of writing about Jesus, especially in Europe. Many of the resultant books were attempts to understand Jesus as a figure in history. Looking back on this monumental output, Albert Schweitzer⁴⁹ not only critically examined the scholarly endeavors but also effectively wrote the books' obituaries as failed efforts that were overly influenced by their authors' various theological, social, and political perspectives.⁵⁰ These scholarly works, classified as "lives of Jesus," including Schweitzer's own take on the subject, have been characterized ever since as the "first quest for the historical Jesus."

Mark Allan Powell identifies three defining characteristics of these 19th-century "lives of Jesus":⁵¹

1. They impose a grand scheme that dictates the theme of the work and through which the Gospels are interpreted.
2. They exclude parts of the Gospel accounts that do not fit the scheme.
3. They add new material not found in any of the Gospels to fill gaps in the story.

Veltman provided no evidence that in writing on the life and teachings of Jesus, Ellen White read or used any of the scholarly publications that Schweitzer reviewed. Although *DA* focused on Jesus in the context of the Gospels, it certainly did not do so as critical, historical scholarship. It was not part of the "first quest of the historical Jesus" and was never listed or reviewed as such by scholars like Schweitzer or Powell. *DA* was not "a life of Jesus."

However, besides these scholarly publications, many other books that appeared during the 19th century were more general and devotional surveys on Jesus' life and teachings. The most systematically biblical of these were the so-called "lives of Christ" that purported to tell the story of Jesus as found in the narratives and teaching units of the Gospels. Others were

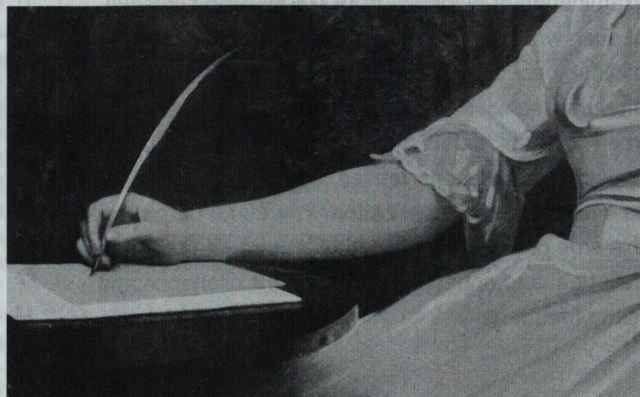
collections of sermons and devotional materials on aspects of Jesus' life and teachings.

Although Powell's criteria for "lives of Jesus" refer to the scholarly writings associated with the 19th-century "quest for the historical Jesus," they can reasonably be extended to define the many general and devotional "lives of Christ" that White read and incorporated in her own writings. So, by this definition, is *DA* a typical, 19th-century "life of Christ"?

1. *DA* is the culmination of White's writing on the life and teachings of Jesus from the perspective of the so-called "Great Controversy" theme—clearly a defining, grand scheme.⁵²
2. *DA* excludes material that does not fit the scheme, e.g., Matthew 9:18-26 (especially the content of verse 18 and the absence of corresponding material found in Mark 8:35-36 and Luke 8:49-50); Luke 22:35-38.
3. *DA* adds material to fill gaps in the stories, as seen in the above example of the Transfiguration story.

The publishers of *DA* clearly identified it with the "lives of Christ," writing: "There is many a 'Life of Christ' written, excellent books, large funds of information, elaborate essays on chronology and contemporaneous history, customs, and events, with much of the teaching and many glimpses of the many-sided life of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet it may be truly said, 'the half has never been told.'"⁵³ Their implication is that *DA* fills the void.

Accordingly, Ellen White was the author of what can reasonably be classified as a 19th-century "life of Christ." In fact, she clearly valued and used many of the "lives of Christ" written by her contemporaries, incorporating vast amounts of their extrabiblical details, observations, and devotional ideas in her own "Christ" books. Veltman's important research demonstrated that her frequent literary dependence was limited to the authors of "lives of Christ"⁵⁴ and collections of



Ellen White was the author of what can reasonably be classified as a 19th-century “life of Christ.”



sermons and devotional materials.⁵⁵ These volumes not only contemplated the spiritual meanings of the narratives and teaching units in the Gospels but also regularly augmented and inflated the biblical narratives. White not only incorporated in her own writings many examples of this type of literary inflation from the contemporary “lives of Christ,” but also added her own devotional material and narrative extensions.

One article on *DA* notes that it is part of a five-volume collection of White’s books known as the “Conflict of the Ages,” a series which the article describes as “a devotional commentary spanning Bible history from Genesis to the second coming of Christ.”⁵⁶ That this series, which includes *DA*, is “devotional” is without question. That it is a “commentary”—not so much. One would not expect a genuine commentary to harmonistically pick and choose the biblical texts on which to comment; to ignore contexts, linguistics, OT settings of NT quotes, author tendencies, original languages, etc.; to leave out problematic or challenging material; or to regularly add details to the narratives. *DA* does all of this. It is devotional literature but not a commentary.

What, then, is the literary genre of Ellen White’s writings on the Bible? First, let me say what it is not. It is not scholarship, exegesis, or the product of or a contribution to biblical studies. Rather, from my examination of evidence from *DA* as representative of such writing, I conclude that it is biblical fiction—biblical, because it is based on underlying, although often-harmonized, biblical texts; fiction, because it freely amends, deletes, enhances, rearranges, and applies the biblical narratives. This should not be seen as a negative characterization. The usual purpose of this type of writing is to motivate spirituality, stimulate devotion, and enhance the religious experience and faith of readers.

Endnotes

1. One bibliography of her works includes more than 600 titles. Marilyn Crane, “EGW Bibliography,” Loma Linda University: University Libraries, <https://library.llu.edu/heritage-research-center/egw-estate-branch-office/egw-bibliography>. According to Arthur Patrick, White wrote about 26 books, 200 tracts, and 5,000 articles. Patrick, “Author,” in *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, eds. Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 91. The most definitive book list contains about 155 titles. “EGW Writings book list,” Ellen G. White Estate, <https://whiteestate.org/books/booklist/>. Cf. “List of Ellen G. White Writings,” Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Ellen_G._White_writings.
2. The title of the original, individual volume was *The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels and Satan and His Angels*.
3. *Story of Prophets and Kings As Illustrated in the Captivity and Restoration of Israel*. Originally published as *The Captivity and Restoration of Israel*.
4. The manuscript was unfinished at the time of her death, July 16, 1915.
5. The main collections of books on biblical materials were *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 3 or 4 vols. (1874-1878) and the so-called “Conflict of the Ages” series, 4 of 5 vols. (1888-1917).
6. E.g., *Early Writings*, 78; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, 663-665.
7. “Official Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” Seventh-day Adventist Church, <https://www.adventist.org/beliefs/>.
8. Published in 1898, *DA* expanded parts of *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vols. 2-3 (1877-1878), which itself enlarged sections of *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1 (1858).
9. Marian Davis letter to W. C. White, August 9, 1897, quoted by Fred Veltman, *Full Report of the Life of Christ Research Project* (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: Life of Christ Research Project Review Committee, November 1988), 431. The bracketed, underlined clarifications are in Veltman’s quotations. He does not indicate whether they are in the original. On the same page, Veltman provided his own summary of the situation: “It is clear from this comment of Marian Davis and from the general introduction to this investigation that the objectives in producing this new life of Christ included both the necessities of including the old material and adding ‘fresh matter.’ The writers also recognized the need for a ‘rearrangement’ of the chapters.”
10. *DA*, 17. For a description of the *DA* project and the role of Marian Davis in it, see Patrick, 94-96.
11. For summaries of Veltman’s work, see Patrick, 106 and Gary Land, “Biographies,” in *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, eds. Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 332-333.
12. Ch. 28, “The Transfiguration,” in *2SP* contains a significant amount of material before and after the biblical narrative of the Transfiguration. In *DA*, this additional material is covered in separate chapters.
13. E.g., Jesus described as the “Man of Sorrows”; reference to the “rugged path” and “lonely mountainside”; the Savior seeing the gloom of his disciples; the introduction of more modern spelling and the capitalization of divine pronouns; the change of *SP*’s historical present verbs to past tense.
14. E.g., God the Father had chosen Moses and Elijah; the disciples did not hear Jesus’ conversation with Moses and Elijah; the reference to Jesus’ coarse, soiled garments; mention of Jesus’ interest in meditation in addition to prayer; Jesus’ not being clothed with divine radiance at

- the end; some "Moses" material; minor deletions like descriptions of the mountain, trail, and cloud.
15. Veltman, *Life of Christ Project*, 406. These were the first five and the last six sentences of the chapter. As for the word count of these materials, only 237 of the 957 total words in this chapter deal directly with the Transfiguration.
 16. White and her editors were aware of the biblical material that lay behind *DA*, ch. 46. Following the title, "He Was Transfigured," the reader is informed, "This chapter is based on Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36."
 17. White used the KJV in her material on the Transfiguration.
 18. Most scholars of the Gospels now understand this unit to be an example of the Triple Tradition, i.e., common material in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, where Mark is thought to be the earliest account and used as the main source for the other two.
 19. The symbols below mean the following: "*" is a substitution; "+" is an addition; "-" is a deletion.
 20. Luke: about eight days after these sayings.
 21. Luke: Peter and John and James.
 22. Luke + to pray.
 23. Matt + and his face shone like the sun; Luke: and while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed.
 24. Matt/Luke - such as no one on earth could bleach them.
 25. Matt/Luke + suddenly.
 26. Luke: they saw two men.
 27. Matt/Luke: Moses and Elijah.
 28. Luke: They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him.
 29. Matt: κύριε "lord"; Luke: ἐπιστάτα "master."
 30. Matt + if you wish.
 31. Matt: I will (ποιήσω ὧδε). This reading is based on the strong evidence of κ B C 700*, supported by NA28, UBS5, and most modern English versions (e.g., ASV, ERV, ESV, GNT, NASB, NET, NIV, RSV). The late, Majority Text, followed by the KJV (see above) and its modern derivatives read "let us make here" (ποίησωμεν ὧδε). Bruce M. Metzger (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994], 34-35) concludes that the Majority reading of Matt was assimilated to the readings of Mark 9:5 and Luke 9:33. I would add that, on internal grounds, the reading ποιήσω ὧδε more easily accounts for the change to ποιήσωμεν ὧδε than the reverse. Therefore, based on external and internal evidence, the reading ποιήσω ὧδε is preferred, validating at least the {B} rating—that the supported reading "is almost certain" (Metzger 14).
 32. Matt + here.
 33. Matt - He did not know what to say, for they were terrified; Luke: not knowing what he said.
 34. Matt: while he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud; Luke: while he was saying this a cloud came and.
 35. Luke + and they were terrified as they entered the cloud.
 36. Luke: ὁ ἐκλεγμένος "my chosen" (lit. "the chosen one").
 37. Matt + When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid."
 38. Luke: When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.
 39. Some other examples of Matt's unique, generous treatment of Peter, compared to Mark and Luke, include: the designation "first" regarding Peter when listing the names of the Twelve (10:2; *contra* Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14); Peter walking on the water (14:28-31; missing in Mark and Luke); Jesus' extensive, positive response to Peter after his "confession" (16:17-19; missing in Mark and Luke); Matt's unique story of Peter being sent to catch a fish and extract the temple tax from its mouth (17:24-27).
 40. See note 31 for the textual evidence.
 41. Two examples of Matt's more positive assessment of the disciples compared to Mark, his source, are the Stilling of the Storm, where Matt renders Jesus' response to the fearful disciples in Mark, "have you still no faith?" (4:40) with "you of little faith" (8:26); and the Request Concerning the Sons of Zebedee, where Matt has the mother of James and John make the unfortunate request (20:20-21) rather than the *disciples themselves*, as in Mark 10:35-36.
 42. At this point in the chapter, White departed from specifically discussing the Transfiguration and inserted 40 sentences (720 words) that explore the prior experiences of Moses and Elijah.
 43. These word count numbers include not only her discussion of the Transfiguration itself but also the extensive considerations of Moses and Elijah.
 44. However, White's language "I saw" or "I was shown" is no guarantee that she saw these things in vision or dream. As Ron Graybill, then associate secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, acknowledged in 1981, her books contain literary "borrowings" that "appear in descriptions of the content of specific visions to Mrs. White." He further advised, "It would be unwise at this point to assert that there is any particular book written by Mrs. White or any type of writing from her pen in which literary borrowing will not be found." Ron Graybill, "E. G. White's Literary Work: An Update," Ellen White Investigation, <https://www.nonsda.org/egw/graybill.shtml>.
 45. Veltman, 437.
 46. Veltman, 437.
 47. Veltman, 438.
 48. Veltman, 438.
 49. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress From Reimarus to Wrede* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1911).
 50. Schweitzer reviewed the writings of about 50 who wrote "lives of Jesus" during the late 18th century and the 19th century, including the following: Bruno Bauer, Wilhelm Bousset, Gustaf Dalman, Karl August Hase, Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, Adolf Jülicher, Hans Lietzmann, Hermann Samuel Reimarus, Ernest Renan, Friedrich Ernst Daniel Schleiermacher, David Friedrich Strauss, Johannes Weiss, Christian Hermann Weisse, A. Wünsche.
 51. Mark Allan Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 12-15. Powell's volume is a history of the "quest for the historical Jesus" - from the first quest in the 19th century, through the new quest in the middle of the 20th century, to the third quest from the end of the 20th century to early 21st century.
 52. The continuity of the "Great Controversy" theme through the trajectory of White's books on Christ is clear from the following: 1SG was originally published in 1858 as *The Great Controversy, Between Christ and His Angels, and Satan and His Angels*. 2SP was originally published in 1877 as *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan. Life, Teachings and Miracles of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. 3SP (1878) was originally published in 1878 as *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan. The Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. 2-3SP were "Later expanded as *The Desire of Ages*." See "EGW Writings book list."
 53. *DA*, 17.
 54. According to Veltman, White was dependent on "lives of Christ" by the following: John Cumming, Alfred Edersheim, Frederic W. Farrar, John Fleetwood, Cunningham Geikie, William Hanna, John Harris, J. H. Ingraham, George Jones, John Ross Macduff, Daniel March, James A. Wylie. These were uncritical works, none of which were reviewed by Schweitzer. Veltman (Appendix E:1-10) provides short biographical sketches for most of these writers, virtually all of whom were pastors who wrote for general, non-scholarly Christian readers.
 55. White also used devotional material from the writings of: John Cumming, Daniel March, Henry Melvill, Francis Wayland, Octavius Winslow.
 56. "The Desire of Ages," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Desire_of_Ages.