

ELLEN G. WHITE'S USE OF LITERARY ASSISTANTS

Jerry Moon¹

I. Introduction

- A. During her lifetime, Ellen White employed some 20 paid or unpaid individuals to help her in preparation of her letters and manuscripts for mailing or publication.
 1. Categories of work performed included:
 - a. Stenography: taking down oral material in shorthand
 - b. Simple copying by hand or typewriter: up to 10 carbon copies were made of some documents
 - c. Minor “copy editing”: correcting spelling, grammar, improving sentence structure, etc.
 - d. Major editorial compilation of books: reserved for a select few of her most trusted helpers
 2. Ellen White used the term “editing” with reference to the work of some of her most trusted assistants.² However, there were two important differences from the common use of that term:
 - a. Ellen White's helpers were to remove imperfections without changing the *thought*. They were absolutely forbidden to alter Ellen White's concepts or intrude any personal ideas of the assistant into the manuscript (W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, May 7, 1900; cited in Jerry Moon, *W. C. White & Ellen G. White: The Relationship Between the Prophet and Her Son* [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993], p. 224; hereinafter abbreviated *WCW*).
 - b. Even Ellen White's characteristic *vocabulary* was not to be changed. Fannie Bolton was discharged partly because she substituted her own style and vocabulary for that of Ellen White (Letter, E. G. White to W. C. White, Oct. 21, 1892, in *WCW*, 222).
- B. The existence of this group is very significant for quite different reasons
 1. Critics have exploited Ellen White's use of literary help in three ways:
 - a. They have asserted (as did Canright) that anything written by a true prophet should be absolutely perfect in first draft and need no improvement. Implicit assumption: dictation-verbal inspiration
 - b. They have sometimes claimed that Ellen White's helpers were the real authors of her works. Fannie Bolton once claimed to have written *Steps to Christ*. A little time on the CD-ROM, however, will demonstrate that *Steps to Christ* actually began as a compilation and that much of it existed in

¹This lecture uses, by permission, major extracts from Roger W. Coon's presentation, “EGW's Use of Literary Assistants: The Prophet as a Writer,” revised April 13, 1995.

²For example, see letters, Ellen G. White to W. C. White, Aug. 15, 1897, p. 5; June 15, 1893, p. 3. other Ellen White writings long before Fannie Bolton joined Ellen White's staff.

- c. The fact that Ellen White counseled with church leaders regarding the publication of her works is cited as evidence that she was manipulated or “influenced” -- in some way controlled by those around her. One purpose of my dissertation was to discover whether there was any truth at all to the allegations of J. H. Kellogg and others that Ellen White was manipulated by her son, W. C. White. The charge appears to have been an excuse manufactured by those who did not want to believe that her writings were inspired or authoritative.

2. On the positive side, Ellen White's use of secretaries, editorial assistants, and editorial advisors, has three important implications for understanding her and interpreting her writings.
 - a. She obviously did not believe in a verbal concept of inspiration. She held that “Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with *thoughts*. But the words receive the impress of the individual [human] mind” (1 *SM* 21). We will deal more with this matter in a later presentation.
 - b. Her willingness, even her insistence, that nothing be published without first receiving a critical reading from the best qualified people available, shows her humility, her good sense, and the total absence of any illusions of infallibility. She not only formally disclaimed infallibility (1 *SM* 37) but she lived in harmony with that disclaimer.
 - c. The degree of trust she placed in the virtually unknown Christians who made up her staff, as well as in denominational leaders whom she invited to read and evaluate her writings shows that while she had an unshakable conviction of her divine call, and of the authority of the divine revelations made to her, she did not consider herself beyond the possibility of making mistakes, or above benefitting from constructive criticism. At the same time she was secure enough in her basic self-identity to invite criticism of her work.

“I have all my publications closely examined. I desire that nothing shall appear in print without careful investigation. Of course I would not want men who have not a Christian experience, or are lacking in ability to appreciate literary merit, to be placed as judges of what is essential to come before the people, as pure provender thoroughly winnowed from the chaff. I laid out all my manuscript on *Patriarchs and Prophets* and on vol. IV [*Great Controversy*] before the book committee for examination and criticism. I also placed these manuscripts in the hands of some of our ministers for examination. The more criticism of them the better for the work.” E. G. White to W. H. Littlejohn, Aug. 3, 1894, (Letter 49, 1894, cited in 10 *MR*, 12-13).
- C. Before we examine the work of Ellen White's literary assistants, let us look first at Scripture and note the biblical precedent for a true prophet's utilizing the services of secretarial or editorial help in writing.

II. Examples of Biblical Prophets Who Used Literary Assistants

- A. Old Testament
 1. Jeremiah: Speaks repeatedly of receiving “the word of the Lord” (1:2, 4, 9, 12, 14, 17ff).
 - a. Identity of his secretary: a man named “Baruch” (36:4-6, 17, 18, 27, 32).
- B. New Testament
 1. Paul employed a number of secretarial helpers:
 - a. Romans: Tertius (Rom. 16:22).
 - b. 1 Corinthians: Sosthenes (?) (1 Cor. 1:1).
 - c. 2 Timothy: Luke. “These words [in 2 Timothy], dictated by Paul just prior to his death, were written by Luke for our profit and warning” (4T 353:1).
 2. Peter had a secretary, Silvanus [Silas] (1 Peter 5:12).
 3. John. According to a tradition of the Greek Orthodox Church, Prochorus (Acts 6:5) volunteered to share John's exile on Patmos.
- C. Conclusion

1. In both OT and NT there is evidence that Bible writers used the assistance of literary helpers.
2. In view of this precedent, it should be neither surprising nor blameworthy if Ellen White employed literary assistants.

III. Why Ellen White Needed Literary Assistants

- A. Limited Formal Education
 1. Because of her accident, Ellen White had less than 4 years of formal education.
 3. However, she had other sources of education:
 - a. Wide reading
 - b. Extensive travel
 - c. Close association with other people who were more highly educated and gifted in other ways.
 - d. Study of Scripture, which she regarded as the true “higher education”
 - e. Approximately 2,000 dreams and visions, in which she conversed with Jesus, angels, and others. She considered this a true higher education.

“With the light communicated through the study of His word, with the special knowledge given of individual cases among His people under all circumstances and in every phase of experience, can I now be in the same ignorance, the same mental uncertainty and spiritual blindness, as at the beginning of this experience? Will my brethren say that Sister White has been so dull a scholar that her judgment in this direction is no better than before she entered Christ's school, to be trained and disciplined for a special work? Am I no more intelligent in regard to the duties and perils of God's people than are those before whom these things have never been presented? I would not dishonor my Maker by admitting that all this light, all the display of His mighty power in my work and experience, has been valueless, that it has not *educated* my judgment or better fitted me for His work” (5T, 686, cited in WCW, 217).
 4. However, her limited *formal* education did leave her with one group of limitations regarding literary skills: she was never strong in the technical aspects such as spelling and punctuation. Through the “life education” factors listed above, she developed into a very articulate speaker, but spoken English doesn't require spelling and punctuation skills. Likewise as a writer, she could be eloquently articulate in her expressions, but without skill in spelling and punctuation and similar technical matters.
- B. Limitations From The Circumstances In Which She Wrote
 1. After receiving a vision or dream, Ellen White usually wrote very rapidly, anxious to get it all down on paper while it was fresh in her mind.
 2. Much of her first draft composition possesses a unique “stream of consciousness” aspect, the result of much haste in writing.
 3. Limitations from working while weary or burdened with anxiety. Her deep concern and involvement with people and their problems often weighed her down.
 4. Limitations from attempting to portray difficult material. Her personal diary entries for Jan. 10 and 11, 1873, and letter 67, 1874, show her anxiety, frustrations, and feelings of personal inadequacy (3 SM 90).
- C. Effective Time Management
 1. Ellen White juggled the roles of wife, mother, speaker, writer, and counselor to many people. In order to keep up with all her obligations, she hired cooks, housekeepers, and nannies for her children, so why not secretaries?

2. The volume of her correspondence alone would often have been more than a full-time job had she done her own typing. In addition, she was involved in producing books, articles, and sermons.
3. A large part of editorial skill is mastery of the technical aspects of written language. It is a far greater gift to create concepts and ideas than to correct spelling and grammar. Ellen White was not incapable of editing her own writing (as one can see by the frequent interlineation of further comments in her typed letters and manuscripts). But she was not trained for that role, and she had more important things to do. So she hired others to perform those functions.

IV. Categories of Literary Helpers

A. Family Members

1. Husband, James White (1840s to 1870s)
 - a. He was educated as a schoolteacher, although like his wife, the bulk of his real education was “life education.”
 - b. Helped with the *Spiritual Gifts*, Vols. I-IV series (1858-64).
 - c. Ellen White wrote out her thoughts during the daytime (while James was engaged in pastoral/evangelistic responsibilities):
 - (1) At night they would sit together by candlelight at the table.
 - (2) James White would particularly:
 - (a) Correct grammatical errors
 - (b) Eliminate needless/excessive repetition (1SM 50).
 - d. Ellen White did not regard his judgment as “infallible,” nor his words “inspired;” “but I have ever believed him better qualified for this work than any other one of our preachers because of:
 - (1) “His long experience, and because
 - (2) “I have long seen he was especially called and adapted to the work . . . “ by the Lord (1T 612, 6123).
2. Niece, Mary Clough (1876, 1877)
 - a. Daughter of Ellen's eldest sister, Caroline Clough; father a Methodist clergyman.
 - b. Only non-SDA known to have been so employed.
 - (1) Literary talent was in the genes of the Harmon family.
 - (a) Mary Clough had written for newspapers.
 - (b) Franklin E. Belden, son of sister Sarah, wrote perhaps 600 gospel songs.
 - (c) Ellen White's son James Edson wrote both books and religious music; with cousin Frank Belden collaborated on first SDA hymnal, *Hymns and Tunes* (1886).
 - c. Ellen White had a twofold ulterior motivation in so employing her niece:
 - (1) She hoped for Mary's conversion to the remnant church.
 - (2) Through Mary, she hoped to reach her sister Caroline, for the SDA message.
3. Daughter-in-law, Mary Kelsey White (1874-1890)
 - a. First wife of W. C. White (April 20, 1857 - June 18, 1890). Died of tuberculosis contracted in Basel, Switzerland while she, W. C. White, and Ellen White were in Europe, 1885-87 (WCW, 22, 89).
 - b. Willie and Mary met in Battle Creek where Mary was a French major at BCC and a typesetter and proofreader at the Review and Herald.
 - c. When the Whites went to California in 1875 to found the *Signs of the Times* and the Pacific Press, Mary went along as a press worker. In 1876 she was elected treasurer of the Press, appointed managing editor of the *Signs* and married to W. C. White. J. H.

- Kellogg had been Willie's rival for her hand, and never fully forgave Willie for taking her to Europe where she caught the tuberculosis that she died of.
- d. Mary wrote a number of editorials and articles for the *Signs* during 1875-76 (WCW, 22-25). As a member of Ellen White's staff, she helped prepare for the printer *Testimonies* vols. 1-5, as well as other projects (See Moon, WCW, 22-25, 119-129).
 4. Son, James Edson White (1895-1896)
 - a. Edson's great contribution to the cause was his evangelistic work among African-Americans in the Southern USA from 1894 to 1909 (See Ron Graybill, *Mission to Black America*).
 - (1) He wrote a *Gospel Primer* which served the dual purpose of a basic reading textbook and an introduction to the gospel.
 - (2) His stern-wheeled riverboat *Morning Star* included living quarters, staterooms for other workers, chapel, library, photographic darkroom, kitchen, and a print shop, where he printed:
 - (a) Extracts from the Gospel of John.
 - (b) *Christ Our Saviour* (158 pp.) - selected chapters from Ellen White's "Life of Christ" manuscript which would be published in 1898 as *Desire of Ages*. For *Christ Our Saviour*, Edson rewrote the DA chapters in basic English suitable for beginning readers.
 - b. In 1900, Marion Davis reworked Edson's 158-page work to 182 pages, and it was republished as *The Story of Jesus*, a children's book still in print.
 - c. Ellen White not only supplied Edson with advance drafts of the chapters of the "Life of Christ" manuscript, but strongly encouraged his project of rewriting them in simplified English.

"Edson, you are at liberty to select from my writings the matter that is needed for the proposed simple tracts and booklets for the southern field . . . You will know how simple to make the truth so as to be understood and what portions to select . . . All that can be done should be done for the southern field" (Letter 86, 1895, in PM 209).
 5. Son, W. C. White
 - a. Third of James and Ellen's 4 sons; younger of the 2 surviving sons (Moon, WCW, xii).
 - b. Of all the White family, Willie White was the most like his mother in temperament, viewpoints, lifestyle, and agreement with her on all major issues. She came to trust him implicitly (WCW, 58-59, 66).
 - c. Ellen White began involving him in secretarial and perhaps editorial responsibilities when he was 19 (WCW, 63).
 - d. After the death of his father, W. C. White became his mother's most trusted confidant.
 - e. By 1881, when he was 27, he was acting as general supervisor of Ellen White's editorial staff (WCW, 112-113). He went with her to Europe and to Australia. She appointed him as the one primarily responsible for the custody of her writings after her death, and he headed the White Estate from 1915 till his own death in 1937 (See WCW, 451-456).
 - B. In-House Salaried Staff
 1. At any given time, Ellen White would have between 6 and 12 employees working in her publishing enterprise.
 - a. They would come, work for a period of time, then leave, and their places would then be taken by other newcomers.
 - (1) Yet--significantly--Ellen White's literary style remained consistently unique through the years, though there was a normal, gradual evolution in her style over her lifetime.

- (2) But this consistency in style is one of the evidences that Ellen White (and not her literary helpers) indeed was the author of the books which bore her name.
 - b. Their salaries were paid from the customary publishers' royalties paid to Ellen White for her book manuscripts.
2. Why she needed so many helpers:
 - a. The majority served as typists, in that era long before computers and photocopy machines.
 - b. Authors in those days often carried many responsibilities now assumed by publishers, such as:
 - (1) Copy reading.
 - (2) Proofreading.
 - (3) Reference checking.
 - (4) Commissioning of illustrative art work.
 - c. Ellen White was even responsible for providing the publishers with the metal plates used in the printing process of the day.
 - d. Consequently, her royalties from book sales were substantially larger than those paid to authors today, because her expenses were correspondingly much greater.
3. Identity of some of her helpers:
 - a. Marian Davis [1847-1904]; employed 25 years [1879-1904], and one of the longest-serving).
 - (1) Ellen White called her “my chief worker” and “my bookmaker.” “Her work is of a different order altogether” (3SM 91).
 - (a) She directed the “Life of Christ” (*Desire of Ages*) project as chief assistant.
 - (b) She also did major work in compiling MH and Ed.
 - (2) For biography see:
 - (a) Eileen M. Lantry, *Miss Marian's Gold*; PPPA, c1981, 80 pp.
 - (b) SDAE [1976]: 376, 377.
 - b. Other workers (during Ellen White's lifetime) included:
 - (1) Adelia Patten, who later married I. D. Van Horn, an evangelist, entered the White home in 1861 to help care for the boys and assist Ellen White in preparing her writings for publication. Patten edited the *Youth's Instructor* (1864-1867) and served as editor of and contributor to the 1864 composite work *Appeal to the Youth*. She wrote the biographical sketch of the life and death of Henry White that preceded an edited compilation of Ellen White's letters to her sons (See WCW, 3, 9 n. 1, 38 n. 4, and *SDA Encyclopedia*, art. Van Horn, Isaac Doren).
 - (2) Miss E. J. Burnham.
 - (3) Miss Sarah Peck [1868-1968], SDAE [1976]: 1085.
 - (4) Miss Maggie Hare.
 - (5) [Mr.] Dores E. Robinson [1879-1957], SDAE [1976]: 1224.
 - (6) Miss Minnie Hawkins.
 - (7) “Sister Tenney” (wife [?] of George C. Tenney [1847-1921], SDAE [1976]: 1470.
 - (8) Miss Frances (“Fannie”) E. Bolton [1859-1926]: see Ron Graybill, *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, White Estate, April, 1982, 122 pp.; see also “The Sad Saga of Fannie Bolton” in Appendix A.
 - (9) Mrs. W. F. Caldwell.
 - (10) Charles C. Crisler [1877-1936], SDAE [1976]: 358, 359.
- C. Professional Colleagues Acting as Consultants

1. Some read manuscripts and made suggestions on how to explain complex theological ideas in simplified form; rearranged ideas, did minor rewording:
 - a. J. H. Waggoner [1820-89], SDAE [1976]: 1563, 1564.
 - b. J. N. Loughborough [1832-1924], SDAE [1976]: 815, 816.
 - c. H. Camden Lacey [1871-1950], SDAE [1976]: 757.
 - d. Edwin R. Palmer [1869-1931], SDAE [1976]: 1070, 1071.
2. Some read manuscripts on health-related subjects – not to determine their veracity, but, rather, to see if they could rephrase matters in ways more acceptable with contemporary medical professionals as well as educated laymen:
 - a. J. H. Kellogg, see preface to *Christian Temperance & Bible Hygiene* (1890).
 - b. Dr. David Paulson [1868-1916], (SDAE [1976]: 1084) helped with MH, ca. 1905.
3. Some did assigned research on specific topics:
 - a. W. W. Prescott [1855-1944]: Education
 - (1) Commissioned to provide substitute *historical* quotations for 1911 ed. GC, to replace similar quotations in 1888 (and earlier) editions from books now out-of-print.
 - (2) He also presumed to submit a list of suggested changes for *theological* “errors” which he presumed to find in earlier editions of GC.
 - (3) Ellen White accepted many of his historical suggestions, but rejected his theological suggestions.
 - (a) See biographical sketch *SDA Encyclopedia*; Gilbert M. Valentine, “W. W. Prescott; SDA Educator,” Ph.D. dissertation, AU (1982, 2 vols, 659 pp.); portion reproduced in *The Shaping of Adventism* (AU Press, 1992, 307 pp.); Arthur L. White shelf document, “The Prescott Letter to W. C. White (April 6, 1915): A Statement,” June 15, 1981, 41 pp.

V. Was Ellen White the Author of the Books Which Bore Her Name?

- A. A recurring theme among critics of EGW is the suggestion that she is not the *real* author of the books which bear her name.
 1. Various “reasons” have been offered to support this conjecture (and that is exactly what the charge is--unsupported allegation):
 - a. In her earlier years: her limited education allegedly precluded the possibility of writing the sophisticated works attributed to her (which church leaders were supposed to have ghost-written).
 - b. In her latter years: senility is said to have set in, and she was alleged to be totally incapable of phrasing an intelligent sentence because of the infirmities of advancing age.
 2. Interestingly, the critics have failed to bring forward hard, coercive evidence to back up these ingenious speculations (and, of course, the burden of proof rests with the critic).
- B. An examination of the objective data suggests the total fallacy of this line of reasoning. Let us now examine:
 1. The internal evidence.
 2. The external evidence.
- C. Internal Evidence for Her Authorship
 1. Literary Style: A careful rhetorical analysis of stylistic elements in the corpus of the EGW writings (which covered six decades) points to the obvious conclusion that these are all the literary productions of one and the same author.
 - a.

There is, over the years, a recognizable evolution in literary style (as there is with any writer of literature):

- (1) Sentence structure--and length--in the earliest writings tend to be simple, with much use of compound-complex sentences.
 - (2) Vocabulary tends toward the simplest, most basic words.
 - (3) Paragraphs tend, generally, to be inordinately long.
 - (a) And *Early Writings* is a classic example of these manifestations.
2. In later years, unsurprisingly, a maturity in development of style is observed:
- a. Sentence and paragraph length varies from page to page.
 - b. Vocabulary is more sophisticated.
 - c. And there is an aesthetic beauty in much of the prose not often witnessed in the earliest writing.
3. There is an evolution of style; but it is an evolution in the style of one writer, not an evidence of multiple-authorship, as some critics aver.
- a. Some of EGW's literary helpers stayed for long tenures: Marian Davis worked for her 25 years.
 - b. But perhaps the more common experience was a fairly short tenure--helpers came and went, while EGW continued to labor with her pen.
 - (1) You see, if her helpers were the real authors of those works, then there should be marked-even abrupt--changes in the established literary style over the decades.
 - (2) But an examination of those writings does not support the assertion of the critics; and the evidence forces the conclusion that we deal with the works of a single author.
 - c. We note in passing that these arguments have much in common with those raised against the authorship of various Biblical books.
 - (1) Evangelical scholars reject these groundless assumptions and assertions for the same reasons that we reject allegations against EGW's authorship of the books which bear her name.
4. Existence of Handwritten Originals
- a. The first practical typewriter was marketed in 1874; 11 years later (in 1885, when EGW was 58), she purchased these machines for her office staff. She was a progressive person who wanted up-to-date equipment for her helpers.
 - b. That EGW herself, however, never learned to operate a typewriter is fortunate for researchers today, because the first draft of all her manuscripts was written in longhand--indisputable evidence, today, that she was, indeed, the author! She, therefore, perhaps tended to need more literary helpers than might otherwise have been the case. And the task of many of her helpers was simply to reduce to typewritten form the handwritten ("autograph") manuscript so that the editing process might be advanced.
 - c. There is an evolution not only in literary style, but also in EGW's handwriting. The late Arthur L. White, Secretary of the White Estate for nearly a half-century, was so familiar with the original manuscripts that he would often astound visitors to the vault by asking them to select one at random, then hold a hand over the date, and allow him to guess the date of origin. (He seldom missed by more than a year or two!)
- D. External Evidence for Her Authorship
1. The Testimony of Ellen White herself: Mrs. White claimed to be the author of her books:
 - a. In a letter to Dr. David Paulson, June 14, 1906, she referred to *GC*.

- (1) This book first appeared in print in 1884 under the title, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 4.
- (2) In 1888, it came out under the more familiar present title.
- (3) In 1911, under the direct supervision of its author, *GC* was revised to its present form.

- b. Twice in one paragraph of this letter she refers to “my introduction,” and “my statement” which was contained within that introduction:

In my introduction to *The Great Controversy* you have no doubt read my statement regarding the Ten Commandments and the Bible, which should have helped you to a correct understanding of the matter under consideration.--ISM 24-25.

- c. And in a 1900 letter to *GC* President G. A. Irwin (1897-1901) from Australia, EGW referred to the literary production of *DA*, with particular reference to the role of Marian Davis, in these words:

The books are not Marian's productions, but my own, gathered from all my writings. Marian has a large field from which to draw, and her ability to arrange the matter is of great value to me. It saves my poring over a mass of matter, which I have no time to do.--Letter 61a, April 23, 1900; cited in 3SM 91.

2. The Testimony of Marian Davis: In a letter to W.C. White, Aug. 9, 1897, Marian Davis, chief project co-ordinator of the “Life of Christ” (*DA*) Project team, referred to a letter received from C.H. Jones, long-time manager and president of the Pacific Press, who had been “hounding” her to get the *DA* manuscript in to him immediately, as he had an exceedingly tight production schedule at that publishing house and wanted to fit this book into it. Note, especially, the concluding sentence:

“I received notice from C. H. Jones that it was planned to publish “Desire of Ages” in the spring of '98, and in order to do this, all the copy must be in the hands of the printers as early as September, '97.

“From what I learned of the artist's work, I cannot believe that the printers will be ready for the manuscript by September. They have now 25 chapters, as finally revised. Twenty-five more we're prepared to send, but a few changes will have to be made in them, as I finish the later chapters. For this I am holding them. . . .

“Sister White is constantly harassed with the thought that the manuscript should be sent to the printers at once. I wish it were possible to relieve her mind, for the anxiety makes it hard for her to write and for me to work. . . . Sister White seems inclined to write, and I have no doubt she will bring out many precious things. I hope it will be possible to get them in the book. There is one thing, however, than not even the most competent editor could do--that is prepare the manuscript before it is written.”--Cited in *Sourcebook*, pp. H-6/33, 34.

3. The Testimony of W. C. White

“Those who have been entrusted with the preparation of these manuscript[s], have been persons who feared the Lord, and who sought him [sic] daily for wisdom and guidance, and they have shared much of His blessing, and the guidance of His Holy Spirit in understanding the precious truths that they were handling. . . . And in answer to prayer, my memory has been refreshed as to where to find very precious statements amongst mother's writings, that brought in connection with the manuscript at hand, would make a useful article.

“However thankful the copyist may be for this quickening of the mind and memory, it would seem to me to be wholly out of place for us to call this ‘inspiration,’

for it is not in any sense the same gift as that by which the truths are revealed to mother.”

4. Internal and external evidence attests that Ellen White was the real author of the books that bear her name.

VII. Role of White Estate Literary Assistants Since EGW's Death

- A. New EGW books have been developed in the past two decades in an attempt to meet the previously unmet needs of different groups as we enter the late 20th century and beyond:
 - 1. “Simplified” Books: the original EGW text is paraphrased in a much more simplified basic English vocabulary, to meet the needs of the blind, the deaf, those for whom English is a second language, children.
 - 2. “Condensed” Books: the original EGW text is retained, but substantially edited (“boiled-down”) to reduce the total bulk by up to one-third the number of words in the original, thus adapting these books to changing conditions, and to be inviting and appealing to a contemporary audience not accustomed to reading large books.
 - 3. “Abridged” Books: the original EGW text is retained, but some passages (ranging from a paragraph to a page to an entire chapter) are excerpted from the larger EGW works, and placed in small-book format.
- a. For elaboration on the different kind of EGW books available today, see Appendix C.

VIII. Summary

- A. Bible writers used literary assistants.
- B. Ellen White’s use of the term “editing” with reference to the work of others on her writings included two fundamental restrictions:
 - 1. No change in her thought
 - 2. As little as possible change in her characteristic vocabulary.
- C. She denied belief in dictational-verbal inspiration.
- D. Her insistence that nothing be published without critical evaluation by trusted associates shows her personal humility and absence of any claims of infallibility.
- E. Both internal and external evidence supports the conclusion that although Ellen White received editorial help from some 25 different people during her writing career, she remains the real author of the books that bear her name.
- F. Ellen White’s last will and testament specifically authorized her Estate to
 - 3. Translate her writings into other languages
 - 4. Publish new selections from her published and unpublished writings to meet the needs of the church.

IX. Review Questions for Exam Preparation

- 5. Give 3 reasons why EGW’s use of literary assistants is *significant* for an understanding of her work and writings.
- 6. Give two major restrictions relating to “editing” that were placed on those who did editorial work for EGW.
- 7. Give 3 Bible writers known to have used literary assistants, and name at least one literary assistant for each of them.
- 8. Give 3 general categories of reasons why EGW *needed* literary assistance.
- 9. Name the person who was EGW’s primary literary assistant on the Life of Christ (*Desire of Ages*) project. EGW called her “my bookmaker.”

10. Name some of the denominational leaders whom EGW asked to assist in compiling and evaluating book manuscripts. (Outline gives 7 in addition to James, Willie, and Edson White.)
11. Give two evidences that regardless of the individuals who gave various kinds of assistance, EGW is indeed the real author of the books published under her name.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Concerning Ellen G. White's Use of Literary Assistants, see:

I. Sourcebook Documents

- H-1 "Inspired Writers' Literary Assistants," by Robert W. Olson, White Estate, Feb. 8, 1989, 6 pp.
- H-S "How Ellen G. White's Books Were Written," by W. C. White, Seminary Lecture, June 18 and July 27, 1935, 37 pp.
- HE "How *The Desire of Ages* Was Written," by Robert W. Olson, White Estate, May 23, 1979, 47 pp.

II. Other Documents

1. W. C. White and D[ores] E. Robinson, *Brief Statements Regarding the Writings of Ellen G. White*, unpublished monograph, Ellen G. White Estate, Feb. 12, 1933. (This document was subsequently reissued and published as an insert in the *Adventist Review*, June 4, 1981, with an introductory statement by the White Estate Trustees, dated May 7, 1981.) 16 pages.
2. [Ron Graybill,] *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, Ellen G. White Estate, April, 1982, 122 pages.
3. [Arthur L. White,] *The 1911 Edition of "The Great Controversy": An Explanation of the Involvements of the 1911 Revision*, Ellen G. White Estate, March, 1962, 14 pp.

III. Books

1. Ellen G. White. *Selected Messages*, Book Three. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980.) Chapter 12: "Literary Assistants in the Work of Ellen G. White," pp. 88-93. See also W. C. White letters to L. E. Froom, 455-465.

APPENDIX A

Categories of Ellen G. White Books

1.

Books she "wrote as books":

- a. Examples: EW, SG I-IV, SP I-IV, GC
2. **Compilations** (one of three duties expressly assigned to White Estate Trustees):
 - a. Examples in her lifetime: DA, MH, Ed, etc.
 - b. Examples posthumously: TM, CH, CD, AH, CG, etc.
3. **"Simplified"**: paraphrase of original text into more simple English vocabulary
 - a. Approved by EGW during her lifeline (Letter 86, 1895)
 - b. Indicated by "adapted from" on either title-page or copyright-page
 - c. Target audience: persons with limited vocabulary
 - (1) In print now:
 - (a) *Story of Jesus*: original work done by Edson White (EGW's son) in 1896, while working largely among illiterate ex-slaves among southern US blacks. Originally 158 pp., adapted from DA, and titled *Christ our Saviour*. In 1900 Marian Davis, at request of EGW, revised and expanded it to 182 pp.; published today as *Story of Jesus*.
 - (b) *Steps to Jesus* (also published as *Knowing Him Better*): an adaptation of *Steps to Christ*

- (2) “Translations” now completed but not yet scheduled for publication:
 - (a) *Story of Redemption*
 - (b) *Counsels for the Church*, 2 vols.: a compilation of materials from the 9 vols. of *Testimonies for the Church*, for non-North American, English-speaking nations where poor members cannot afford the nine-volume set
4. “Condensed”: original text retained, but edited (“boiled down”) to reduce total bulk
 - a. Parallel: The *Reader's Digest* “condensed books” section each month
 - b. Examples:
 - (1) In print now:
 - (a) The entire “Conflict of the Ages” series of five books:
PP (755 pp.) = *From Eternity Past* (548 pp.)
PK (733 pp.) = *From Splendor to Shadow* (377 pp.)
DA (835 pp.) = *From Heaven With Love* (556 pp.)
AA (602 pp.) = *From Trials to Triumph* (314 pp.)
GC (678 pp.) = *From Here to Forever* (411 pp.)
[N.B. Five books in original series have 3,603 pp.; in “condensed” series, reduced to 2,206 pp.]
 - (2) Manuscripts now condensed but awaiting translation (into French) and publication (in English):
 - (a) COL
 - (b) MH
5. “Abridged”: excerpts passages (from paragraphs to chapters) from larger books, with original text retained:
 - a. Examples:
 - (1) *Testimony Treasures*, Vol. I (605 pp. from 1T-4T)
Testimony Treasures, Vol. II (575 pp. from 5T-6T)
Testimony Treasures, Vol. III (591 pp. from 7T-9T)
 - (2) *Impending Conflict* (127 pp. from GC)
 - (3) *A New Life* (64 pp., chapters taken from GC, 1SM, MH, and other books; published earlier as *Revival and Beyond*)
 - (4) *Happiness Homemade* (188 pp. from AH)
 - (5) *Homemade Happiness* (61 pp. from AH)
 - (6) *Life at Its Best* (314 pp. from MH)
 - (7) *Be Healthy and Happy* (63 pp. from MH)
 - (8) *How to Get Along With Others* (2 chapters from MH)
 - (9) *Your Mind and Your Health* (2 chapters from MH)