

THE EDITORIAL PROCESS
of Ellen G. White and Her Staff
Jerry Moon¹

Introduction

- A. Purposes of this Presentation
 - 1. To show why Ellen White believed it necessary to edit her writings.
 - 2. To explain how this process developed, beginning with earliest writings.
 - 3. To examine in detail the work of her editorial staff.
 - 4. To note how she protected the integrity of her writings in the editorial process.
 - 5. To examine examples of the editing of letters, articles, and books.
- B. Dictionary definitions of “edit”:
 - 1. “To collect, prepare, and arrange (materials) for publication.”
 - 2. “To revise or correct, as a manuscript.”
- C. Ellen White’s additional restrictions on the common definition of editing.
 - 1. No alteration of her *thought*.
 - 2. As little as possible alteration in her characteristic *vocabulary* and style.
- D. Presupposition:
 - 1. Thought inspiration. 1SM 21:2.
- E. The Divine Mandate for Editing
 - 1. E. G. White to Uriah Smith, Feb. 19, 1884 (Letter 11, 1884), cited more fully in Moon, *W. C. White*, 126.
 “I was shown years ago that we should not delay publishing the important light given me because I could not prepare the matter perfectly. . . .”

 “I was shown that I should present before the people in the best manner possible the light received; then as I received greater light, and as I used the talent God had given me, I should have increased ability to use in writing and in speaking.”

 “I was to improve everything, as far as possible bringing it to perfection, that it might be accepted by intelligent minds. As far as possible every defect should be removed from

¹This lecture is based on Jerry Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White: The Relationship Between the Prophet and Her Son* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993), 60-65, 71-72, 112-122, 221-225, 354-359. The section on *Great Controversy* is adapted from Roger W. Coon, “EGW’s Use of Literary Assistants: The Prophet as a Writer,” revised April 13, 1995.

all our publications.”

II. Ellen White's Earliest Writing

- A. *In Ellen White's second vision* (late December 1844 or early January 1845), she was directed to tell others what she had seen (2SG 35).
- B. *In another vision* in late spring or early summer 1845, she was directed for the first time to write out what she had seen (2SG 60).
- C. *Her first published writing* was a letter written December 20, 1845 to Enoch Jacobs, an Adventist editor. At the end of the letter she emphasized “This was not written for publication; but for the encouragement of all who may see it.” Jacobs, however, promptly published it in the next issue of the *Day-Star*, January 24, 1846. When Ellen saw her letter in the *Day-Star* she wrote again.

“My vision which you published in the *Day-Star* was written under a deep sense of duty, *to you*, not expecting you would publish it. Had I for once thought it was to be spread before the many readers of your paper, I should have been more particular and stated some things which I left out” (E.G. Harmon to Enoch Jacobs, February 15, 1846, in *Day-Star*, March 14, 1846, emphasis supplied).

These two letters highlight the fact that from the moment she began to write, she clearly sensed that writings intended for publication needed to receive “more particular” preparation than writings for merely private communication.

III. Early Editorial Assistance

A. By James White

As Ellen Harmon's friendship with James White blossomed into marriage, it was only natural that she should share with him her concerns about preparing her writings for publication. Years later their third son, Willie, recalled the early editorial process that took place between his parents. Ellen White would often read aloud to James what she had just written. “If her husband discovered weaknesses in the composition, such as faulty tenses of verbs, or disagreements between subject, noun, and verb, he would suggest grammatical corrections. These she would write into her manuscript and then read on.”²

Willie's first glimpses of the decisions involved in publishing also came in the home. “Sometimes after Mother had read to her husband an important personal testimony, the question would arise, ‘What shall we do with it?’” Besides the person for

²W.C. White, “How Ellen White's Books Were Written: Addresses to Faculty and Students at the 1935 Advanced Bible School, Angwin, California, Part I–June 18, 1935,” p. 3, SD, EGWRC-AU.

GSEM 534
Editorial Process

whom it was first written, “the instruction it contains will be of service to many others,” he recalled his mother saying. “How shall we get it before them?”³

B. By Other Early Leaders

Not only James White, but others as well, were asked for their counsel regarding the most effective way to use the material written. W.C. White reported his mother as “often” saying to James, “I have done my part in writing out what God has revealed to me. You and your associates who are bearing the burden of labor for our people at large, must decide what use shall be made of it.” At other times she and James would “consult with” some of the “leading brethren” regarding “the best manner” of publicizing the instruction given.

“In the early days of this cause, if some of the leading brethren were present when messages from the Lord were given, we would consult with them as to the best manner of bringing the instruction before the people. Sometimes it was decided that certain portions would better not be read before a congregation. Sometimes those whose course was reproved would request that the matters pointing out their wrongs and dangers should be read before others, that they, too, might be benefited” (SM 1:51).

Thus there are very early precedents for Ellen White’s inviting suggestions from respected associates regarding the editing and publication of her writings. So it was natural for her to entrust similar responsibilities to Willie as he grew up.

C. By W. C. White

W. C. White’s adult involvement in his mother’s publishing work went back at least to July 1874, when, she began enlisting him in secretarial and perhaps editorial aspects of her work. They worked together on a thirty-two-page tract entitled *The Sufferings of Christ*. She explained to James: “Willie has helped me, and now we take it to the office for Uriah [Smith] to criticize it” (E.G. White to James White, July 17, 1874).

The following spring, at age 20, Willie was appointed acting business manager of the fledgling Pacific Press. His involvement in the publishing aspects of his mother’s work continued in connection with his managerial responsibilities at the Pacific Press. She sent him articles to publish in the *Signs of the Times*, saying that Uriah Smith wanted them for the *Review and Herald* but that she preferred for the *Signs* to have them first. Six days later she wrote to Willie again.

“If you do not want them, I will let Uriah publish them. He wants them. Let me know at once if you feel any reluctance and had rather they would appear in [the] *Review*

³Ibid., 5.

GSEM 534
Editorial Process

first, all right just express yourself freely” (E.G. White to W.C. White, July 20, 1875).

It appears that it was immaterial to her which periodical published the material first. She may well have wanted to give her editor son the opportunity to “scoop” the other magazine, but if for any reason he did not want to publish her articles immediately she would let Uriah Smith have them for the *Review*. In this case, she allowed both White and Smith to publish immediately or postpone publication at their own discretion.

In 1878-1879 she gave him considerably broader authority in the preparation of *Testimonies* 28 and 29 (now in *Testimonies* 4:271-383 and 4:384-522). She authorized him to select what material to publish in No. 28, and what material to hold over for No. 29. In adapting personal testimonies for publication to a wider audience, she specifically directed him to make minor changes as necessary to protect the identity of the individuals originally addressed: “All very personal [references] such as names must be left out” (E.G. White to M. K. White and W.C. White, January 6, 1879). She asked him not to shorten the material merely for space considerations, but did authorize him to “abridge” if “the composition would be helped by so doing.”

“We would say to you, Make what corrections you deem necessary, but Father and I thought you should not abridge unless the composition would be helped by so doing. That [which] we have received and read is all right we think. We shall have more matter soon for the second testimony, No. 29, to follow immediately [after] No. 28.”

The final product would be safeguarded by her practice of receiving advance proofs for her approval before publication (E.G. White to W.C. White and M.K. White, January 2, 1879).

She also asked him and Mary to gather materials for her to use in her writing (E.G. White to W.C. White and M.K. White, October 30, November 7, 1880).

While the extent of W.C. White’s editorial involvement in his mother’s work during this period was small, he had already begun most of the editorial functions that he would perform later.

D. W. C. White’s Position after James White’s Death

During the year following James White’s death in August 1881, the twin blows of grief and physical illness brought his widow so low that she expected her life to end soon. In this state of ill health she decided to attend the camp meeting held from October 5 through 17, 1882, in Healdsburg. According to several corroborating accounts, she experienced sudden healing, visible to all, as she stood before the congregation (see Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 72).

GSEM 534
Editorial Process

Shortly afterward, Ellen had a night vision in which she was told of God's provision for someone to assist her with her work in the absence of her husband.

The Mighty Healer said, "*Live*. I have put my spirit upon your son, W.C. White, that he may be your counselor. I have given him the spirit of wisdom, and a discerning, perceptive mind. He will have wisdom in counsel, and if he walks in My way, and works out My will, he will be kept, and will be enabled to help you bring before My people the light I will give you for them. . . . I will be with your son, and will be his counselor. He will have wisdom to defend the truth; for I will take charge of his mind, and will give him sound judgment in the councils that he attends in connection with the work. . . . Your son will be perplexed over many matters that are to come before my people, but he is to wait and watch and pray, and let the words of God come to the people, even though he cannot immediately discern the purpose of God" (E. G. White to G. I. Butler, October 30, 1906).

In another description of the same experience, she wrote that she had been "shown" in 1882 that "my son, W.C. White, should be my helper and counselor, and that the Lord would place on him the spirit of wisdom and of a sound mind." The terms "helper" and "counselor" would encompass a growing list of responsibilities as the years went by.

IV. The Development of an Editorial Staff⁴

A. Personnel

1. W. C. White acted as the general supervisor of Ellen White's editorial staff, beginning at least by 1881, with Mary K. White and Marian Davis working under him.
2. Others included: Joseph H. Waggoner, Sara McInterfer, and Jenny Ings.
3. Others not connected with Ellen White's personal staff, but who were occasionally asked to help, included:
 - Uriah Smith, editor of the *Review and Herald*
 - C. H. Jones, manager of the Pacific Press
 - E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, co-editors of the *Signs of the Times*
 - J. H. Kellogg, medical superintendent of the Battle Creek Sanitarium

B. W. C. White's Responsibilities

1. Included assigning tasks to the different staff members (at least when Ellen White was away) and supervising the editorial process from general concepts to details of wording.

⁴The next two sections are taken or adapted from *W.C. White and E.G. White*, 112-122.

GSEM 534
Editorial Process

2. Trusted editorial assistants, like Mary K. White and Marian Davis, were given the responsibility to edit minor details. On occasion, Ellen White indicated that Marian Davis was too reluctant to assume responsibility for even minute details without receiving specific authorization from herself or W.C. White on every individual word. Early in 1889, while W.C. White was interim president of the General Conference, Ellen White described the situation in a letter to his wife, Mary K.:

Willie is in meeting early and late, devising, planning for the doing better and more efficient work in the cause of God. We see him only at the table. Marian will go to him for some little matters that it seems she could settle for herself. She is nervous and hurried and he so worn he has to just shut his teeth together and hold his nerves as best he can. I have had a talk with her and told her she must settle many things herself that she has been bringing Willie. Her mind is on every point and the connections, and his mind has been plowing through a variety of difficult subjects until his brain reels and then his mind is in no way prepared to take up these little minutia [sic]. She must just carry some of these things that belong to her part of the work, and not bring them before him nor worry his mind with them. Sometimes I think she will kill us both, all unnecessarily, with her little things she can just as well settle herself as to bring them before us. Every little change of a word she wants us to see. I am about tired of this business (E.G. White to Mary K. White, [March 1889]).

3. There was a hierarchy of responsibility in the editorial process:
 - a. Minute editorial details were delegated to trusted assistants.
 - b. Larger questions were submitted to W.C. White, and to Ellen White as she had time.
 - c. Final approval was given by Ellen White when the assistants' work was completed.

IV. The Editorial Process in the 1890s, according to W. C. White⁵

- A. The context of the W. C. White letter quoted below occurred as follows. One of Ellen White's editorial assistants was Fannie Bolton. After leaving Ellen White's employ, Bolton made claims that she had largely authored some of the writings that went out over Ellen White's signature. Specifically, she claimed that a letter of reproof to A.R. Henry of Battle Creek had been outlined by Ellen White for Fannie to compose entirely. The allegations have since been refuted, but at the time they sounded plausible to some who were unfamiliar with Ellen White's writings.
- B. Bolton's allegations led W.C. White to write a letter to G.A. Irwin in which he made some detailed comments about the methods of Ellen White's editorial staff (W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, May 7, 1900). Note how this letter describes in detail the editorial

⁵This section is taken and adapted from *W.C. White and Ellen G. White*, 221-225.

GSEM 534
Editorial Process

process.

C. Clear distinction between Ellen White's role and that of her staff.

"I have been very familiar with mother's work for many years, and with the work that is required of her copyists, and editors. . . . I do not know of any one who has ever been connected with her work [except Bolton], but would as quickly put their hand into the fire and hold it there, as to attempt to add any thoughts to what mother had written in any testimony to any individual."

D. Ellen White's First Draft

"In his own time and manner, the Lord reveals to her precious truths and facts regarding the movements and dangers, and privileges of the church, and of individuals. These things she writes out as she has time and strength, often rising at a very early hour, that she may write while the matter is fresh in her mind, and before there is liability of interruption in her work.

"As many matters are revealed to her in a very short space of time, and as these matters are sometimes similar, and sometimes different; so she writes them out, sometimes many pages on one subject, and sometimes dealing with many subjects in a few pages. In her eager haste to transfer to the written page the thought[s] that have been pictured to her mind, she does not stop to study gramatical [sic], or rhetorical forms, but writes out the facts as clearly as she can, and as fully as possible."

E. Why the amount of editing varied.

"Sometimes, when mother's mind is rested, and free, the thoughts are presented in language that is not only clear and strong, but beautiful and correct; and at times when she is weary and oppressed with heavy burdens of anxiety, or when the subject is difficult to portray, there are repetitions, and ungram[m]atical sentences."

F. Two levels of editorial responsibility

1. Responsibilities of "copyists" (typists)

"Mother's copyists are entrusted with the work of correcting gram[m]atical errors, of eliminating unnecessary repetition, and of grouping paragraphs and sections in their best order."

2. Responsibilities of "workers of experience"

"Mother's workers of experience, such as sisters Davis, Burnham, Bolton, Peck, and Hare, who are very familiar with her writings, are authorized to take a sentence, paragraph, or section, from one manuscript where the thought was clearly and fully expressed, and incorporate it with another manuscript, where the same thought was expressed but not so clearly.

G. Editorial Limits

"But none of mother's workers are authorized to add to the manuscripts by introducing thoughts of their own. They are instructed that it is [only] the words and thoughts that mother has written, or spoken, that are to be used."

GSEM 534
Editorial Process

H. Ellen White's Role in the *Editorial Process*

1. Explaining orally what she meant.

"If a passage is not fully understood, the copyist asks [Ellen White to explain] its full meaning and proper connection."

2. Reviewing the work of her staff and writing corrections or additional material.

"When corrected and plainly copied with the typewriter or the pen, the manuscripts are all carefully examined by mother, and corrected, wherever correction is required, and then copied again, if the corrections are numerous. This is done with many manuscripts, not only because corrections are made in the work of the copyist, but because mother sees a way to express the thought a little more clearly, or more fully."

3. Complete rewriting of difficult passages.

"Often mother writes out a matter the second time, because she feels that it is very difficult to put in writing the scene, or events, as they are presented to her."

4. Writing new material to fill gaps in compiled materials (3 SM 93).

I. The Holy Spirit aided Ellen White's helpers, but this was not "Inspiration."

"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. I, myself [W. C. White], have felt the same blessing, and heavenly enlightenment in answer to prayer for wisdom to understand the spiritual truths in these writings, that I have in studying the Bible. This was a sweet fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit as a teacher and guide, in understanding the word. 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.

"It is right here that S[iste]r Bolton is in great danger of being deceived and of leading others astray. The blessing of a clear mind, and an active memory, she has called an inspiration, and the unwise use of the term has led those who know less of the work . . . to come to wrong conclusions about what she has done."

V. Editorial Tasks: Letters, Sermons, Articles, and Books

- A. This section describes the process by which Ellen White's handwritten drafts became typewritten letters or published articles and books. As noted above this involved two kinds of editorial work.

GSEM 534
Editorial Process

1. The first kind of editorial work was the transcription of Ellen White's first-draft handwritten document into an acceptable grammatical form.
2. The second kind of editorial work involved compiling Ellen White's typewritten material (diary, letter, or manuscript) into a new literary work (article, pamphlet, or book).

B. Letters

The perennial task of Ellen White's staff was the preparation of letters, which could involve much more than merely typing the handwritten manuscript. W. C. White mentioned to his mother how the staff handled the preparation of one long letter. "Yesterday we received your letter accompanied by a long one for Bro. A. C. B[ourdeau]. Mary [White] will try to fix it as she has strength. I had not the heart to give it to Marian [Davis]. She is worn out with this sort of work and it is a great burden to her to take these very long manuscripts, and decide how to fix them" (W. C. White to E. G. White, November 22, 1886; the letter referred to [E. G. White to A. C. Bourdeau, November 20, 1886] was some 4000 words long, making 11 typewritten pages).

The kind of work Ellen White expected of her staff is shown in the instruction she gave about the preparation of another letter, written from England and sent to her staff in Basel, Switzerland. "I send you this letter and want you to have it copied and send me a copy at once to read to Mrs. Green. Do with it as your judgment shall indicate." The last sentence is an obvious reference to the editorial process. She indicated that her staff in Basel should edit the letter according to their own judgment, type it, and send it back to her in England as soon as possible, where she would personally read it to Mrs. Green (E. G. White to Children, July 20, 1887).

C. Sermons and periodical articles

1. One of the sources of periodical articles was the sermons Ellen White presented on a regular basis. In a letter from Basel, she described the process by which her sermons were placed in writing. Sara McInterfer "writes out the discourses I have given which she has taken in shorthand." She explained that Mary K. White was also engaged in "preparing" for publication "morning talks" that Ellen White had given "in Battle Creek and other places" (E. G. White to Edson and Emma, January 19, 1887). These sermons were frequently published in periodicals, in both the *Review and Herald* and the *Signs of the Times*.
2. During the European period, there were times when her limited staff could not keep up with this demand. It was decided that the staff should concentrate their efforts on the publication of *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 1 (forerunner of *Patriarchs and Prophets*).
3. In order to save time, W. C. White proposed to C.H. Jones, manager of the Pacific

GSEM 534
Editorial Process

Press, a different method of handling the preparation of periodical articles. Ellen White would depend on the editors of the respective papers to prepare the manuscripts for publication.

“Mother has notified the editors of the Review that she will furnish them with manuscript if they will prepare it for the paper. The larger part of the sermons which mother has delivered over here have been reported and written out and we can furnish you with a good supply of them, if you have someone there who can prepare them for the paper. It is not reasonable for us to attempt the work here. Mother will gladly furnish this manuscript without charge if we are released from the task of preparing them for the papers” (W. C. White to C. H. Jones, December 5, 1886).

This arrangement highlights the trust she placed in those editors to make careful use of her materials, since the articles would appear in print without the possibility of her final inspection.

4. This confidence is also explicit in a letter she wrote to Uriah Smith six years later from Australia.

“You have written to me in regard to what shall be done with the article addressed to the Battle Creek Church. I answer, Do with it as you think best, using it as you judge it will best serve the cause of God. Please follow your own judgment as to the disposal of any thing I may write from henceforth, unless I give special directions concerning it. After it serves the special purpose for which it was written, you may drop out the personal matter and make it general, and put it to whatever use you may think best for the interests of the cause of God. As you say, we are far separated, and two or three months must pass before communications can be answered however important may be their character, therefore it is best not to wait my decisions on matters of this kind, especially when your judgment is evidently in harmony with what is best, and something to which I could have no objection (E. G. White to U. Smith, September 19, 1892).

Here she gave Smith a wide latitude to adapt her testimonies by deleting “personal matter” and then to reuse them as he felt would “best serve the cause of God.” The conservative approach that Smith and other denominational editors took regarding such editing may be a reason why the periodical articles are often rougher in style than the books in which these articles were later reused by Ellen White.

- D. Books. Most of Ellen White’s books were produced in whole or in part by compilation.

1. Marian Davis

Ellen White referred to Marian Davis as “my bookmaker” and described

GSEM 534
Editorial Process

her work of compilation in detail.

She gathers materials from my diaries, from my letters, and from the articles published in the papers. . . . She has been with me for twenty-five years, and has constantly been gaining increasing ability for the work of classifying and grouping my writings (E. G. White to Brother and Sister [J.A.] Burden, January 6, 1903).

She takes my articles which are published in the papers, and pastes them in blank books. She also has a copy of all the letters I write. In preparing a chapter for a book, Marian remembers that I have written something on that special point, which may make the matter more forcible. She begins to search for this, and if, when she finds it, she sees that it will make the chapter more clear, she adds it.

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 (E. G. White to G. A. Irwin, April 23, 1900).

When Marian had brought together her compilation of Ellen White's writings on a topic, she would present the compiled materials to Ellen White. Ellen White would look it over and write additional material as required to unite the material compiled from her previous writings (E. G. White, "A Tribute to Marian Davis," MS 95, 1904).

2. Other compilers

- a. J. H. Kellogg helped in the compilation of *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene* (1890). Kellogg explained in the preface that the book was "a compilation, and in some sense an abstract, of the various writings of Mrs. White upon this subject," with the addition of several articles by James White. "The work of compilation has been done under the supervision of Mrs. White, by a committee appointed by her for the purpose, and the manuscript has been carefully examined by her" (*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, iv).
- b. W.C. White's involvement in book compilation
 - (1) The scope of W.C. White's editorial activities also included decisions regarding the general format and chapter arrangement for his mother's books. This aspect of his editorial role was clearly seen in the planning of the volumes that would eventually be known as *Patriarchs and Prophets* and *Prophets and Kings*. In 1888, *Patriarchs and Prophets* was nearly complete. Ellen White had mentioned the possibility that she might someday write a second volume on Old Testament history, but the suggestion was still tentative and the contents of the proposed volume had not been definitely planned.

(1) W.C. White, viewing the matter from a publishing standpoint, realized the need to plan both volumes at the same time in order to obtain uniformity in size and format. “If Mother really intends that this [first volume] shall be followed with the rest of the Old Testament history,” he wrote to Marian Davis, then the best place to divide the narrative would be between the reigns of David and Solomon. He provided two reasons.

(a) First, he argued that to include the story of Solomon’s reign in the first volume (as it had been in the first volume of *Spirit of Prophecy*) would make *Patriarchs and Prophets* too large. Unless Ellen White should write a great deal of new material for it, the second volume would be disproportionately smaller. To end the first book with David and save the section on Solomon to start off the second would keep them about the same size.

(b) Second, White observed that “as the sins of Solomon prepared the way for the subsequent apostasy and the division of the kingdom, it would seem that the building of the temple and Solomon’s reign” would be an appropriate introduction for the volume dealing with Israel’s captivity. That White’s suggestion was accepted by his mother is shown by the present chapter arrangement of the two volumes (W. C. White to M. A. Davis, August 12, 1888).

VI. The 1888 and 1911 Revisions of *The Great Controversy*

A. English Edition

1. The book we know today as *The Great Controversy* was initially published in 1884 as *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. IV. In 1888, and again in 1911, EGW initiated and personally supervised significant major revisions of the 1884 edition.
2. The nature of the changes undertaken:
 - a. Time references updated: “1800 years” since Christ came are now adjusted to read “1900 years.”
 - b. Historical quotations cited in the 1884/1888 editions from books no longer in print were replaced with similar statements from other contemporary historical accounts.
 - c. Some references to Roman Catholics were adjusted to avoid pejorative connotations (“popish” became “papal,” etc.).
 - d. Approximately three pages of text were removed from the chapter entitled “Snares of Satan” because the matter, originally intended for SDA eyes, would not be appropriate to a broader, non-SDA audience:
 - (1) Some of the deleted matter (which subsequently appeared in TM) might unnecessarily offend some Roman Catholic readers.

GSEM 534
Editorial Process

- (2) EGW defended the deletion (which some uninformed SDAs today feel should not have been made), citing the precedent of Christ:

There are matters in the *Testimonies* that are written, not for the world at large, but for the believing children of God, and it is not appropriate to make instruction, warning, reproof or counsel of this character public to the world. The world's Redeemer . . . presented some matters of instruction, not to the world, but to His disciples alone. While He had communications designed for the multitudes that thronged His steps, He Also had some special light and instruction to impart to His followers which He did not impart to the great congregation, as it would neither be understood nor appreciated by them. . . .

The Lord Jesus thought it necessary to make my things dear to His disciples which He did not open to the multitudes. . . .--TM 34, 35.

- (a) For a more complete statement on the situation, see ALW's monograph, "The 1911 Edition of The Great Controversy," p. 10ff; for a response to the "Pilgrim Rest" accusation, see Appendix B.

B. Spanish Edition

1. The Spanish edition of GC was based upon a translation by Eduardo Francisco Forga made about 1907 or 1908.
 - a. A prior translation, made by two Presbyterian clergy and another non-SDA scholar, was deemed unacceptable in South America because it had an "American Spanish" flavor, and was held to be poorly executed.
 - b. Forga, a new convert with exceptional linguistic ability and literary talent, made the new Spanish translation of GC, which was published in 1913 (and reflected the changes effected by EGW herself in the 1911 English edition).
 - (1) Earlier, Forga had been banished from his native Peru for opposing the Roman Catholic hierarchy there.
 - (2) He later married Margaret Lacey, sister of May Lacey White, wife of W.C. White.
2. Forga's Spanish translation differed from its English counterpart in two respects:
 - a. At Forga's instance (and with EGW's approval) it contained an additional chapter on the Spanish Reformation ("The Awakening in Spain"), written by Clarence C. Crisler (one of EGW's secretaries) and H. H. Hall, and translated by Forga
 - (1) It appears as Chapter 13 in the Spanish GC.
 - b. Unfortunately Forga's translation of passages dealing with the RC Church and the Papacy were phrased much more stridently than they appear in the English version; and the highly-pejorative manner of Forga's expressions would later create unfortunate new problems in South America.
 - (1) Elbio Pereyra (a Washington, DC-based Uruguayan associate secretary in the White Estate in the 1980s) characterized Forga's stance as "a strongly anti-Catholic position" in his monograph: "Eduardo Francisco Forga: The Forgotten Pioneer From the 'Neglected Continent'" (White Estate, Nov.,

GSEM 534
Editorial Process

1987, pp. 16, 25; White Estate Document File DF 33).

- (2) J. W. Westphal, missionary leader in charge of SDA work in South America, early expressed fears of “criticisms I have heard of his strong way of putting things” (*ibid.*, pp. 73, 74).

3. In the middle 1970s, Argentina (where the Spanish edition of GC was published, in Buenos Aires) was controlled by a Roman Catholic military dictatorship.
 - a. The government promulgated an anti-defamation decree which prohibited publication of any literature that disparaged or used offensive language against any religious body--a thinly-veiled law to prevent circulation of anti-Catholic literature in Argentina.
 - b. SDA leaders in Buenos Aires felt that, in harmony with EGW's counsel in GW 468, they should soften some of the more strident expressions in the Spanish edition, to bring it more into harmony with EGW's more moderate statements in the original English edition. She had written”
 - (1) The worker in foreign fields will come in contact with all classes of people and all varieties of minds, and he will find that different methods of labor are required to meet the needs of the people. A sense of his own inefficiency will drive him to God and to the Bible for light and strength and knowledge.

The methods and means by which we reach certain ends are not always the same. The missionary must use reason and judgment. Experience will indicate the wisest course to follow under existing circumstances. It is often the case that the customs and climate of a country make a condition of things that would not be tolerated in another county. Changes for the better must be made, but it is best not to be too abrupt.--GW 468.
4. Some Hispanic workers, familiar with the Buenos Aires revised version, felt that those who produced it not only softened some of Forga's more harsh and strident statements, but that they also, in the process, deleted from the Spanish edition important theological materials as well.
 - a. This newly-revised Spanish edition was sold not only in Argentina but in other Hispanic nations in Central and South America.
 - b. Strong opposition to this alleged deletion of theological materials eventually led to the discontinuance of sales of this newer version, and the original Forga translation was again the only version marketed (Interview with Juan Carlos Viera, White Estate, June 24, 1992).

VII. Conclusion

- A. From the time of Ellen Harmon's earliest writings, she recognized the need of careful editing of material that was to be published.

GSEM 534
Editorial Process

- B. Consequently, she asked family members and other trusted colleagues to make editorial suggestions for improving the spelling, grammatical expressions, and sentence structure of her manuscripts before publication.
- C. At least by 1881, she had begun to employ full-time “literary assistants” to help with typing and editing her manuscript.
- D. A major premise that informed the role Ellen White gave to her editorial assistants was her concept of inspiration. She believed that divine *revelation* did not (usually) dictate the prophet’s words but rather supplied the prophet’s mind with “thoughts” (1 SM, 21). *Inspiration* then guided the prophet as communicator, not only in the initial formulation of thoughts into words, but also in the subsequent improvement of those expressions by herself or with the help of others. Working on this premise, Ellen White employed literary assistants who did various levels of editorial work under her supervision and subject to her final approval (*W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 150-151).
- E. Another motivation was her goal to make her writings as perfect as possible so that educated readers might not be repelled by deficiencies of grammar and syntax. For this reason, Ellen White’s most experienced and trusted workers were authorized to rearrange the sequence of words and sentences and even incorporate clarifying passages from other Ellen White manuscripts in order to improve clarity and readability.
- F. Two levels of editing:
 - 1. Level one: spelling, grammar, repetition
 - 2. Level two: arranging, compiling
- G. However, the work of Ellen White’s literary assistants differed from ordinary “editing” in two important respects.
 - a. Her helpers were absolutely *forbidden to alter Ellen White’s concepts* or to intrude any of their own personal ideas into the manuscript (*W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 224).
 - b. Even Ellen White’s distinctive *writing style* and *vocabulary* were to be altered only as necessary for clarity and grammatical correctness. Fannie Bolton was discharged partly because she substituted her own style and vocabulary for that of Ellen White’s (*ibid.*, 222).
- H. Ellen White’s editorial role: explaining, reviewing, revising, rewriting, and new writing.
- I. EGW herself initiated and personally supervised the revisions of the 1884, 1888, and 1911 editions of GC, in an ongoing effort to adapt the presentation to the needs of a public readership.
 - 1. In this process some statements were modified, and others were deleted, at her direction.
 - a. There has been no conspiratorial plot by church leadership to destroy her writings.

GSEM 534
Editorial Process

- b. Ellen White herself personally approved and supervised all changes made.
 - 2. The 1911 edition represented a substantially large outlay in time, money, and personnel.
 - 3. And it is clear that it was this edition (and not the earlier ones) which EGW wished to have circulated among the non-SDA public once it became available.
 - 4. Contemporary efforts now to continue the circulation of the 1884 and 1888 editions (ostensibly because the 1911 edition is alleged to have been perverted and polluted by unconsecrated, unbelieving SDA leaders) is patently as false as it is absurd.
- J. The current work of the White Estate:
 - 5. Mandated in detail in Ellen White's will.
 - 6. An extension of the work of her staff during her lifetime.

Exam Review Questions

- 2. Who was Ellen White's first editorial assistant? (p. 2)
- 3. After James White's death, whom did God give to Ellen to be her chief human "counselor"?
- 4. *After* writing the initial draft, identify four *additional* aspects of Ellen White's involvement in the editorial process.
- 5. Who first translated the *Great Controversy* into Spanish?
- 6. What was distinctive about the linguistic style of that translation?
- 7. In what other way does the Spanish *Great Controversy* still differ from the English version?
- 8. What was the topic of chapter 13 in the Spanish translation of *Great Controversy*?
- 9. Who authored chapter 13 in the Spanish translation of *Great Controversy*?
- 10. Explain the origin of the Buenos Aires translation and how it differed, both positively and negatively from the original Spanish translation.
- 11. What are the most important differences between the 1884, 1888, and 1911 versions of *Great Controversy*?

APPENDIX A
The Fannie Bolton Story

- 1. Frances E. Bolton, better known as "Fannie"
 - a. Born: August 1, 1859.
 - b. Died: June 28, 1926, at Battle Creek, MI; she was five weeks less than 67 years of age.
 - c. She was a writer of more than average talent; her compositions included prose reports of an Illinois camp meeting (which attracted EGW's attention) in secular newspapers, among others; poems; and at least one song: "Not I, But Christ" (*SDA Hymnal*), for which she wrote the music as well as words, in 1900.
- 2. Fannie and EGW met in 1887, when Fannie was 28 (and EGW 60), at which time she became one of the EGW literary helpers.
 - a. She worked for EGW for most of the next decade (1890s), before being finally terminated for the last time and sent back to America from Australia.
- 3. From extant documents it becomes clear that EGW, from the very first, sensed in Fannie:
 - a. Mental instability.

GSEM 534
Editorial Process

- b. Spiritual immaturity.
- 4. Fannie's chief complaints, as an employee of EGW's literary operation:
 - a. The work of the literary assistants was not recognized publicly and prominently sufficient to suit Fannie's likes.
 - b. She claimed to have written *Steps to Christ*, and several other literary works of EGW, rather than merely serving as a literary editorial assistant.
 - c. She provided enormous "aid and comfort" to certain critics of EGW who used her as "proof" that EGW was not the author of the works which bore her name.
- 5. After leaving the employ of EGW, Fannie was twice committed to the Kalamazoo (MI) State Hospital for the mentally ill upon two occasions:
 - a. February 20, 1911 to March 18, 1912 (13 months).
 - b. October 9, 1924 to January 21, 1925 (3.5 months).
- 6. Fannie's obituary in the August 5, 1926 *Review and Herald*, p. 22:
 Bolton.--Frances E. Bolton died at Battle Creek, Mich., June 28, 1926. She was widely known by her writings, and many a heart has been cheered by her poems. Dr. A. B. Olsen conducted the burial service in the chapel. F. D. Schram sang songs of Fannie's own composition. "Not I, but Christ," had been exalted in her life, and the peaceful expression on her face told us she felt ready to meet her Master. She was laid to rest at Eureka, Mich.--Mrs. R. C. Porter.

APPENDIX B
Response to Attacks Against the Revisions of *The Great Controversy*

The following statement was prepared by Dr. Ron Graybill, then-Chairman of the History and Political Science Department, La Sierra University, on December 9, 1992, in response to the attack of "Pilgrim's Rest" (Beersheba Springs, TN) entitled: "The Truth About the Original 1884 Great Controversy:"

It is true that Mrs. White did not carry over the first part of the chapter on the "Snares of Satan" from *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. IV (1884), into the 1888 or 1911 *Great Controversy*. The material is reprinted in *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 472; portions of it were used in the morning devotional book *Maranatha*, pp. 163, 208; and of course the church continues to keep in print the original *Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. IV, and has no plans to discontinue its publication and public sale.

The problem with the document you gave me is that Pilgrim's Rest wrongly assumes that if Mrs. White referred to Volume 4 after 1888, she was referring to Volume 4 of *The Spirit of Prophecy* (1884). The very letter quoted (selectively) by Pilgrim's Rest reveals clearly that Mrs. White used the expression "Volume 4" to refer to the new, revised *Great Controversy* of 1888. Take, for instance, Letter 1, 1890, which is quoted on the first page of the document. This entire letter appears in facsimile form in *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, Vol. 2, p. 651ff, a book available through your local ABC. The very first paragraph of this letter states:

GSEM 534
Editorial Process

I have been deeply burdened in regard to the manner in which Vol. IV, “*The Great Controversy*,” has been treated by our canvassers, because it has so long been kept from the field. *It is nearly two years since the new edition was completed, and but little has been done to bring it before the people.*--Letter 1, May 14, 1890 (emphasis supplied).

Clearly, Mrs. White is concerned here not about the circulation of the 1884 book, but about the circulation of the 1888 book. She clearly did approve of the 1888 and 1911 editions of *The Great Controversy*, as you will see when you read Arthur L. White’s account of the preparation of those volumes in his six-volume biography of Ellen White. Also, the E. G. White Estate has documents they will send you specifically on the topic of the 1911 *Great Controversy*.

You have to be very careful about publications from independent groups such as Pilgrim’s Rest. They would like you to buy their materials and contribute to their cause. Therefore they produce documents like this which falsely accuse and seek to undermine confidence in the church. This tactic, of course, increases people’s readiness to divert their contributions from the church to their independent work.

In this case they have produced a document which promulgates a falsehood and slanders the church in the process. I don’t claim that the church is perfect, but I do think a fair-minded person, in possession of all the evidence, will conclude that Ellen White took full responsibility for what was included and what was excluded from the 1888 and 1911 *Great Controversy*. The church’s only failure was in not promoting the 1888 edition vigorously enough when it first appeared.

Pilgrim’s Rest has quoted Mrs. White’s statements about not retracting one word and about not changing what she has written completely out of context. They should have quoted “Regarding the *testimonies* [notice, lower case “t” indicating all Mrs. White’s writings and counsels] nothing is ignored, nothing is cast aside; but time and place must be considered.” *Selected Messages*, b. 1, p. 57. In this statement she meant the “time and place” when statements are issued to individuals or published to the public needs to be considered. In 1888, she decided, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that those few pages on the “Snares of Satan” would not be appropriate for the audience for which the 1888 *Great Controversy* was intended. But the church has not cast the material aside, it has reprinted it and keeps it in circulation in several books.