

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University

## The “Sacred” and the “Common”: Ellen White’s Concept of Revelation-Inspiration

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The **purpose of this presentation** is to explore (1) Ellen White’s concept of inspiration—how God conveyed truth to her mind and worked with her to insure that her writings conveyed the same truth to her readers; and (2) the role of uninspired information in her writings. Fortunately she provides both explanations and examples, so we need not speculate. (All emphasis is my own unless noted otherwise.)

**I. Ellen White’s Concept of Inspiration.** Drs. David and Mary Paulson were co-founders of the Hinsdale Sanitarium and Hospital and colleagues of J. H. Kellogg. In 1906, during the Kellogg crisis, David Paulson wrote Ellen White some pointed questions about inspiration. Here is her reply:

“Dear Brother: . . . In your letter, you speak of your early training to have implicit faith in the Testimonies, and say, ‘I was led to conclude and most firmly believe that *every* word that you ever spoke in public or private, that every letter you wrote under *any* and all circumstances, was as inspired as the ten commandments’ [*italics hers*]. My brother, you have studied my writings diligently, and you have never found that I have made any such claims. Neither will you find that the pioneers in our cause have made such claims. “In my preface to ‘Great Controversy, pages c and d, 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. Here is the statement:—

“The Bible points to God as its Author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all ‘given by inspiration of God’ (2 Tim. 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by his Holy Spirit had shed light into the minds and hearts of his servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed, have themselves embodied the thought in human language.

“The ten commandments were spoken by God himself, and were written by his own hand. They are of divine, and not of human, composition. But the Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, represents a union of the divine and the human. . . .” (RH, August 30, 1906 pars. 2-6).

“God has been pleased to communicate his truth to the world by human agencies, and he himself, by his Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The **treasure** was entrusted to **earthen vessels**, yet it is, none the less, from heaven. The testimony is **conveyed through** the imperfect expression of **human language**; yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power. . . . In perfect harmony with this, are my statements” [in 5T 62-84, from which I quote]: (ibid., par. 9-10)

**Ellen White’s parallel experience.** “When I went to Colorado, I was so burdened for you, that, in my weakness, I wrote many pages to be read at your camp-meeting. Weak and trembling, I arose at three o’clock in the morning, to write to you. **God was speaking through clay.** You might say that this communication was only a letter. Yes, it was a letter, but prompted by the Spirit of God, to bring before your minds things that had been shown me. In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. **I do not write one article in the paper, expressing merely my own ideas.** They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of light shining from the throne” (RH, Aug. 30, 1906 par. 14).

In RH October 8, 1867, she wrote: “Although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, *yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own*, unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation” (ISM 37; cf. 2SG 293). In 1902 she explained, “While I am writing out important matter, He [God] is beside me, helping me. He lays out my work before me, and *when I am puzzled for a fit word with which to express my thought, He brings it clearly and distinctly to my mind.* I feel that every time I ask, even while I am still speaking, He responds, ‘Here am I’” (Lt 127, 1902, in 2MR 156-157). “When, as I write, a new thought comes into my mind, I reverentially thank God for the appropriate word or sentence brought to my mind” (Lt 260, 1903, in 5MR 142). Her classic statement on inspiration was written in 1886:

*“It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration*

*acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual [human] mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God” (1SM 21).*

God gave concepts; but the words used to express them were her own words. God assisted her in choosing those words, especially when she was consciously “puzzled” about a word choice, “yet,” as she explained above, “the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own.” (The context shows that she means words of *her own choosing*, not necessarily of her own *origination*—see lecture on literary borrowing.)

**Required to use her own words.** As Raymond Holmes so aptly observes: “She is saying that she is required by the Holy Spirit to explain divine truths within her own verbal structure. When she said the words she uses are her own, she meant they were not dictated by the Holy Spirit. That would not preclude borrowing them from another literary source if they accurately portrayed what she saw in vision.” After quoting Letter 127, 1902, “*when I am puzzled for a fit word with which to express my thought, He brings it clearly and distinctly to my mind,*” Dr. Holmes comments, “This is not dictation, it is choice assistance of the highest order. The Spirit may bring a word to mind, but the choice of usage was hers. In this way the Holy Spirit helps the inspired writer to choose ‘the appropriate word’ [5MR 142], ‘the most expressive language’ [1SM 22], and the ‘fit word’ [Lt 127, 1902]” (C. Raymond Holmes, “Inspiration of Ellen White,” DF 65-a-1, CAR-AU). Why she had to use her own words will become clearer as we see that:

**Inspiration as education.** Ellen White’s formal education was terminated by her accident, but in later years she acquired a practical education from her visions, Bible study, other reading, writing, travel, life experiences, and association with other educated minds (“as iron sharpens iron,” Proverbs 27:17). In 1889 she described her vision experiences in educational terms:

“For the last forty-five years the Lord has been revealing to me the needs of His cause and the cases of individuals in every phase of experience, showing where and how they have failed to perfect Christian character. The history of hundreds of cases has been presented to me, and that which God approves, and that which He condemns, has been plainly set before me. God has shown me that a certain course, if followed, or certain traits of character, if indulged, would produce certain results. He has thus been *training and disciplining me* in order that I might see the dangers which threaten souls, and instruct and warn His people. . . .”

“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 685-686).

**Why was it necessary for her to put the message in her own words?** Because she was a “scholar” in “Christ’s school” (5T 686) and putting the revealed material into her own words was part of the educational process. The process of articulating revealed concepts in her own words required her to wrestle with, digest, understand, and integrate those concepts into her own thinking. As she wrote regarding education:

“Students should be led to think for themselves, to see the force of truth for themselves, and to speak every word from a heart full of love and tenderness. Urge upon their minds the vital truths of the Bible. *Let them repeat these truths in their own language, that you may be sure that they clearly comprehend them.* Be sure that every point is fastened upon the mind. This may be a slow process, but it is of ten times more value than rushing over important subjects without giving them due consideration. It is not enough that the student believe the truth for himself. *He must be drawn out to state this truth clearly in his own words,* that it may be evident that he sees the force of the lesson and makes its application” (CT 434).

Thus God educated *her*, and through this preparation she became not merely a sacred

stenographer, but a fully educated spokesperson for God, qualified to give inspired counsel based on the cumulative knowledge gained from many visions, without needing to have a new vision about every case.

“When I see men and women taking the very course, or cherishing the very traits, which have imperiled other souls and wounded the cause of God, and which the Lord has reproved again and again, how can I but be alarmed? When I see timid souls, burdened with a sense of their imperfections, yet conscientiously striving to do what God has said is right, and know that the Lord looks down and smiles on their faithful efforts, shall I not speak a word of encouragement to these poor trembling hearts? *Shall I hold my peace because each individual case has not been pointed out to me in direct vision?*” (5T 686-687).

**Why she used other sources of information.** In the above list of the sources of her practical education, only the first two—visions and Bible study—involved inspired sources. All the others—reading, writing, travel, life experiences, and associations—were uninspired sources. She used information from these common sources to illustrate, support, and communicate what she had learned by direct revelation. (See J. Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White: The Relationship between the Prophet and Her Son* [AU Press, 1993], 430, 427-436). ***But the information she gained from uninspired sources was always subordinate to the information she received by direct revelation.*** When she borrowed words and phrases from secondary sources, she modified them to represent her inspired understanding—which was often quite different from that of the author from whom she borrowed. She occasionally quoted verbatim, but it’s relatively rare. Robert Olson gives ten examples (Olson, *101 Questions*, 76-79). In Fred Veltman’s study of 15 entire chapters from *Desire of Ages*, not one sentence was found that had been copied exactly verbatim from a secondary author.

**II. Second issue: the role of uninspired information in inspired writings.** Three years after Paulson’s letter, E. S. Ballenger, a minister in California, struggled with another aspect of the same topic. Concerning Ballenger, Ellen White wrote in 1909: “I am pained to see him denying the testimonies as a whole because of what seems to him an inconsistency--a statement made by me in regard to the number of rooms in the Paradise Valley Sanitarium. Brother A says that in a letter written to one of the brethren in southern California, *the statement was made by me that the sanitarium contained forty rooms, when there were really only thirty-eight.* This, Brother A gives to me as the reason why he has lost confidence in the testimonies.” “The information given concerning the number of rooms in the Paradise Valley Sanitarium was given, *not as a revelation from the Lord, but simply as a human opinion.* There has never been revealed to me the exact number of rooms in any of our sanitariums; and *the knowledge I have obtained of such things I have gained by inquiring of those who were supposed to know.* In my words, *when speaking upon these common subjects,* there is nothing to lead minds to believe that I receive my knowledge in a vision from the Lord and am stating it as such.”

“When the Holy Spirit reveals anything regarding the institutions connected with the Lord's work, or concerning the work of God upon human hearts and minds, as He has revealed these things through me in the past, the message given is to be regarded as light given of God for those who need it. *But for one to mix the sacred with the common is a great mistake.* In a tendency to do this we may see the working of the enemy to destroy souls.

“To every soul whom God has created He has given capabilities to serve Him, but Satan seeks to make this work of service hard by his constant temptation to mislead souls. He works to dim the spiritual perceptions that men may not distinguish between that which is common and that [p. 39] which is holy. I have been made to know this distinction through a life's service for my Lord and Master. . . .

“The message came to me, Dedicate yourself to the highest work ever committed to mortals. I will give you high aspirations and powers and a true sense of the work of Christ. You are not your own, for you are bought with a price, by the life and death of the Son of God. God calls for your child's heart and service under the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

“I gave myself, my whole being, to God, to obey His call in everything, and since that time my life has been spent in *giving the message, with my pen and in speaking before large congregations. It is not I who controls my words and actions at such times.*

“*But there are times when common things must be stated, common thoughts must occupy the mind, common letters must be written and information given that has passed from one to another of the workers. Such words, such information, are not given under the special inspiration of the Spirit of God.*

Questions are asked at times that are not upon religious subjects at all, and these questions must be answered. We converse about houses and lands, trades to be made, and locations for our institutions, their advantages and disadvantages” (ISM 38-39).

**Ellen White’s writings were not all of the same kind.** Her son, W. C. White, to whom she entrusted the care of her writings after her death, contributed the following to a discussion at the 1913 Autumn Council in Washington, DC. “Mother never made the claim, as some have said, that everything she ever wrote at any time was inspired. . . . Mother, like every other prophet of God, had her own private life, and she spoke and wrote about matters of finance, about her household, her farm, her chickens, her horses, and her dairy, and . . . there was no claim that she was speaking regarding these matters with the voice of inspiration”(W. C. White to J. W. Watt, March 7, 1915, in J. Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 414).

**III. Biblical Parallels.** Bible writers included in their inspired writings information not based on direct revelation, such as (1) autobiographical statements based on memory. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.” Paul’s secretary, Sosthenes, had scarcely inked the words when Paul caught himself. “Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas.” Then he decided he had better admit he was working from memory: “Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.” And then he gets to the spiritual point: “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1 Cor 1:14-17). The whole passage is inspired! Paul’s inability to recall those he had baptized makes a better illustration of his main point than if he had remembered.

(2) Paul wrote that passage in response to reports from Chloe’s household; but Paul’s counsel was derived from the cumulative wisdom gained from past revelations. The news was from a human source, but the counsel was inspired.

Far from invalidating the inspiration of the Pauline epistles, these features show that Paul was a real human being, enabling us to not only admire him, but love him as a fellow pilgrim in the way of Christ. These are the kinds of content that Ellen White referred to under the terms “sacred and common.”

**IV. Relating the Sacred and the Common.** How are we to relate to the different categories of content in Ellen White’s writings? Unwarranted distinctions we are not to make:

“You have talked over matters as you viewed them, that the communications from Sister White are not all from the Lord, but a portion is her own mind, her own judgment, which is no better than anybody else’s judgment and ideas. This is one of Satan’s hooks to hang your doubts upon to deceive your soul and the souls of others who will dare to draw the line in this matter and say, this portion which pleases me is from God, but that portion which points out and condemns my course of conduct is from Sister White alone, and bears not the holy signet. You have in this way virtually rejected the whole of the messages, which God in His tender, pitying love has sent to you to save you from moral ruin” (3SM 68-69).

“I have my work to do, to meet the misconceptions of those who suppose themselves able to say *what is testimony from God and what is human production*. If those who have done this work continue in this course, satanic agencies will choose for them” (3SM 70).

Basic principle: “The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture is explained by scripture” (ISM 42). The question of “sacred” versus “common” is to be settled, not by external criteria, but by the internal testimony of the writings themselves. Examples:

1. “Common and everyday topics” (Letters 201, 202, 1903).
4. Not by commandment (Letter 129, 1897).
5. Biographical information based on memory (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 295).

**The “Sacred” Controls the “Common.”** The difference between “sacred” and “common” is not a matter of truth vs. error, but a difference in function between “sacred” truth and “common” knowledge. When Paul tried to recall exactly whom he had baptized in Corinth, his purpose was not to document his work record in Corinth, but to support his assertion that the focus of his ministry was on preaching the gospel, not on accumulating personal disciples (1 Cor 1:11-17). For that purpose it *did not matter* exactly how many he baptized. The very fact that he couldn’t remember the exact number gave further support to his main point. Similarly, the exact number of rooms in the Paradise Valley Sanitarium did not affect Ellen G. White’s counsel to the administrators on how the institution should be operated. “Forty” was 38

rounded to the nearest ten, an **approximation** that was **accurate enough for the purpose**.

In both of these examples the inspired counsel dealt with “sacred” truth. The “common” details were included to illustrate the spiritual principles. The reader may or may not be told whether the “common” data was divinely revealed or received from human sources (e.g., see 1 Cor 1:11). The point is that at the practical level, it usually doesn’t matter, because *the “common” data, whatever its source, was selected and included under the control of inspiration*. This should reduce the temptation of trying to distinguish between inspired and uninspired sources of information—which can easily lead to “higher criticism” of Ellen White and the practical rejection of the inspiration and authority of her writings.

J. H. Kellogg to David Paulson at Autumn Council, 1903: “Doctor [Paulson], this talk of the ‘human side’ of the Testimonies has been a snare to us. No doubt there is a human side to the Testimonies, but with all that[,] there is so much more divinity in the Testimonies than there is in us, that God will never permit us feeble mortals to show up or point out this human side. A weaker thing can never destroy a stronger thing. We must treat whatever comes from that source with the highest respect and seek God for wisdom how to apply it to our lives and our course” (Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 300).

**IV. Conclusion.** Ellen White’s warning not “to mix [confuse] the sacred with the common” (1SM 39) means: Don’t discard or devalue inspired writings because of the presence of some “common” elements.

A. Regardless of whether she wrote or spoke of revealed or common themes, she remained the chosen messenger of God, in private as well as public. She often wrote private letters on common topics. She sometimes expressed unaided human opinions. But she always remained a prophet.

B. “Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35), because God watches over His word to fulfill it (Isa 44:24-26).

C. As God honors His word, so He honors His prophets. (1) 1 Sam 3:19, “The Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.” (2) 2 Kings 1:10, fire from heaven consumed those disrespectful to Elijah. (3) 2 Kings 2:23-24, bears avenged the insults to Elisha. (4) 2 Kings 13:21, dead man raised when his corpse touched the bones of Elisha.

D. God repeatedly vindicated Ellen White’s inspiration. (1) Hiram Patch and the county treasurer (1Bio 174-6; 2SG 122-124). (2) Woman who professed “holiness of heart” (2SG 124-126). (3) Even in her old age, God protected her accuracy (L. H. Christian, *Sons of the North* [Pacific Press, 1942], 176-177).

E. The only safe course: accept the writings in their entirety as the prophet’s total testimony, but use the various parts according to the purposes for which they were given.

### **For Further Reading**

Jerry Moon, “W. C. White on Ellen White’s Historical Authority,” in *W. C. White and Ellen G. White: The Relationship between the Prophet and Her Son*, (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993), 427-436.

### **List of Appendixes<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Appendix A:</b>	“The Sacred and the Common,” Ellen G. White
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<sup>1</sup> Appendixes compiled by Roger W. Coon, “Distinguishing Between the Sacred and the Common,” GSEM 534 Lecture Outline, May 11, 1995.

**Appendix A “The Sacred and the Common”**  
Manuscript 107, 1909, in *Selected Messages, Book 1, 38-39.*

Sanitarium, California, March 5, 1909

I am troubled in regard to Brother A, who for some years has been a worker in southern California. He has made some strange statements, and I am pained to see him denying the testimonies as a whole because of what seems to him an inconsistency--a statement made by me in regard to the number of rooms in the Paradise Valley Sanitarium. Brother A says that in a letter written to one of the brethren in southern California, the statement was made by me that the sanitarium contained forty rooms, when there were really only thirty-eight. This, Brother A gives to me as the reason why he has lost confidence in the testimonies. . . . {1SM 38.1}

The information given concerning the number of rooms in the Paradise Valley Sanitarium was given, not as a revelation from the Lord, but simply as a human opinion. There has never been revealed to me the exact number of rooms in any of our sanitariums; and the knowledge I have obtained of such things I have gained by inquiring of those who were supposed to know. In my words, when speaking upon these common subjects, there is nothing to lead minds to believe that I receive my knowledge in a vision from the Lord and am stating it as such. . . . {1SM 38.2}

When the Holy Spirit reveals anything regarding the institutions connected with the Lord's work, or concerning the work of God upon human hearts and minds, as He has revealed these things through me in the past, the message given is to be regarded as light given of God for those who need it. But for one to mix the sacred with the common is a great mistake. In a tendency to do this we may see the working of the enemy to destroy souls. {1SM 38.3}

To every soul whom God has created He has given capabilities to serve Him, but Satan seeks to make this work of service hard by his constant temptation to mislead souls. He works to dim the spiritual perceptions that men may not distinguish between that which is common and that [page 39] which is holy. I have been made to know this distinction through a life's service for my Lord and Master.... {1SM 38.4}

The message came to me, Dedicate yourself to the highest work ever committed to mortals. I will give you high aspirations and powers and a true sense of the work of Christ. You are not your own, for you are bought with a price, by the life and death of the Son of God. God calls for your child's heart and service under the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. {1SM 39.1}

I gave myself, my whole being, to God, to obey His call in everything, and since that time my life has been spent in giving the message, with my pen and in speaking before large congregations. It is not I who controls my words and actions at such times. {1SM 39.2}

But there are times when common things must be stated, common thoughts must occupy the mind, common letters must be written and information given that has passed from one to another of the workers. Such words, such information, are not given under the special inspiration of the Spirit of God. Questions are asked at times that are not upon religious subjects at all, and these questions must be answered. We converse about houses and lands, trades to be made, and locations for our institutions, their advantages and disadvantages. {1SM 39.3}

I receive letters asking for advice on many strange subjects, and I advise according to the light that has been given me. Men have again and again opposed the counsel that I have been instructed to give because they did not want to receive the light given, and such experiences have led me to seek the Lord most earnestly.--Manuscript 107, 1909. {1SM 39.4}

## **Appendix B:** **“Correct Views Concerning the Testimonies: A Reply to an Inquirer”**

Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, August 30, 1906

Sanitarium, Cal., June 14, 1906.

Dear Brother: Your letter came to me while in southern California. For some weeks the consideration of matters connected with the development of our sanitarium work there, and the writing out of the views given me regarding the earthquake and its lessons, have taken my time and strength. {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 1}

But now I must respond to the letters received from you and others. In your letter, you speak of your early training to have implicit faith in the Testimonies, and say, "I was led to conclude and most firmly believe that every word that you ever spoke in public or private, that every letter you wrote under any and all circumstances, was as inspired as the ten commandments." {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 2}

My brother, you have studied my writings diligently, and you have never found that I have made any such claims. Neither will you find that the pioneers in our cause have made such claims. {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 3}

In my preface to "Great Controversy," pages c and d, 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. Here is the statement:-- {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 4}

"The Bible points to God as its Author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all 'given by inspiration of God' (2 Tim. 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by his Holy Spirit had shed light into the minds and hearts of his servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed, have themselves embodied the thought in human language. {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 5}

"The ten commandments were spoken by God himself, and were written by his own hand. They are of divine, and not of human, composition. But the Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, represents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' John 1:14. {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 6}

"Written in different ages, by men who differed widely in rank and occupation and in mental and spiritual endowments, the books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more strikingly presented by one than by another. And as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony. {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 7}

"As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought out in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of a subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind; a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life. {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 8}

"God has been pleased to communicate his truth to the world by human agencies, and he himself, by his Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, none the less, from heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language; yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth." {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 9}

In perfect harmony with this, are my statements found in the article, "The Testimonies Slighted," written June 20, 1882, and published in "Testimonies for the Church," Vol. V, No. 31, pages 62-84. From

this I quote for your consideration, several paragraphs:-- {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 10}

"Many are looking with self-complacency upon the long years during which they have advocated the truth. They now feel that they are entitled to a reward for their past trials and obedience. But this genuine experience in the things of God in the past, makes them more guilty before him for not preserving their integrity and going forward to perfection. The faithfulness for the past year will never atone for the neglect of the present year. A man's truthfulness yesterday will not atone for his falsehood today. {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 11}

"Many excuse their disregard of the Testimonies by saying, 'Sister White is influenced by her husband; the Testimonies are molded by his spirit and judgment.' Others are seeking to gain something from me which they could construe to justify their course, or to give them influence. It was then I decided that nothing more should go from my pen until the converting power of God was seen in the church. But the Lord placed the burden upon my soul. I labored for you earnestly. How much this cost both my husband and myself, eternity will tell. Have I not a knowledge of the state of the church, when the Lord has presented their case before me again and again for years? Repeated warnings has been given, yet there has been no decided change. . . . {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 12}

"Yet now when I send you a testimony of warning and reproof, many of you declare it to be merely the opinion of Sister White. You have thereby insulted the Spirit of God. You know how the Lord has manifested himself through the spirit of prophecy. Past, present, and future have passed before me. I have been shown faces that I had never seen, and years afterward I knew them when I saw them. I have been aroused from my sleep with a vivid sense of subjects previously presented to my mind; and I have written at midnight letters that have gone across the continent, and, arriving at a crisis, have saved great disaster to the cause of God. This has been my work for many years. A power has impelled me to reprove and rebuke wrongs that I had not thought of. Is this work of the last thirty-six years from above, or from beneath? . . . {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 13}

"When I went to Colorado, I was so burdened for you, that, in my weakness, I wrote many pages to be read at your camp-meeting. Weak and trembling, I arose at three o'clock in the morning, to write to you. **God was speaking through clay.** You might say that this communication was only a letter. Yes, it was a letter, but prompted by the Spirit of God, to bring before your minds things that had been shown me. In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper, expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision--the precious rays of light shining from the throne. . . . {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 14}

"What voice will you acknowledge as the voice of God? What power has the Lord in reserve to correct your errors, and show you your course as it is? What power to work in the church? If you refuse to believe until every shadow of uncertainty and every possibility of doubt is removed, you will never believe. The doubt that demands perfect knowledge, will never yield to faith. Faith rests upon evidence, not demonstration. The Lord requires us to obey the voice of duty, when there are other voices all around us urging us to pursue an opposite course. It requires earnest attention from us to distinguish the voice which speaks for God. We must resist and conquer inclination, and obey the voice of conscience, without parleying or compromise, lest its promptings cease, and will and impulse control. The word of the Lord comes to us all who have not resisted his Spirit by determining not to hear and obey. This voice is heard in warnings, in counsels, in reproof. It is the Lord's message of light to his people. If we wait for louder calls, or better opportunities, the light may be withdrawn, and we left in darkness. . . . {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 15}

"It pains me to say, my brethren, that your sinful neglect to walk in the light, has enshrouded you in darkness. You may now be honest in not recognizing and obeying the light; the doubts you have entertained, your neglect to heed the requirements of God, have blinded your perceptions so that darkness is now to you light, and light is darkness. God has bidden you to go forward to perfection. Christianity is a religion of progress. Light from God is full and ample, waiting our demand upon it. Whatever blessings the Lord may give, he has an infinite supply beyond, an inexhaustible store from which we may draw. Skepticism may treat the sacred claims of the gospel with jests, scoffing, and denial. The spirit of worldliness may contaminate the many and control the few; the cause of God may hold its ground only by great exertion and continual sacrifice, yet it will triumph finally. {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 16}

"The word is, Go forward; discharge your individual duty, and leave all consequences in the hands of God. If we move forward where Jesus leads the way, we shall see his triumph, we shall share his joy. We must share the conflicts, if we wear the crown of victory. Like Jesus, we must be made perfect through suffering. Had Christ's life been one of ease, then might we safely yield to sloth. Since his life was marked with continual self-denial, suffering, and self-sacrifice, we will make no complaint if we are partakers with him. We can walk safely in the darkest path, if we have the Light of the world for our guide. . . . {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 17}

"When the Lord last presented your case before me, and made known to me that you had not regarded the light which had been given you, I was bidden to speak to you plainly in his name, for his anger was kindled against you. These words were spoken to me, 'Your work is appointed you of God. Many will not hear you, for they refuse to hear the Great Teacher; many will not be corrected, for their ways are right in their own eyes. Yet bear to them the reproofs and warnings I shall give you, whether they will hear, or forbear.' . . . {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 18}

"Our people are making very dangerous mistakes. We can not praise and flatter any man without doing him a great wrong; those who do this will meet with serious disappointment. They trust too fully to finite man, and not enough to God who never errs. The eager desire to urge men into public notice is an evidence of backsliding from God, and friendship with the world. It is the spirit which characterizes the present day. It shows that men have not the mind of Jesus; spiritual blindness and poverty of soul have come upon them. Often persons of inferior minds look away from Jesus to a merely human standard, by which they are not made conscious of their own littleness, and hence have an undue estimate of their own capabilities and endowments. There is among us as a people an idolatry of human instrumentalities, and mere human talent, and these even of a superficial character. We must die to self, and cherish humble, childlike faith. God's people have departed from their simplicity. They have not made God their strength, and are weak and faint, spiritually. . . . {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 19}

"I have been shown that unbelief in the Testimonies has been steadily increasing as the people backslide from God. It is all through our ranks, all over the field. But few know what our churches are to experience. I saw that at present we are under divine forbearance; but no one can say how long this will continue. No one knows how great the mercy that has been exercised toward us. But few are heartily devoted to God. There are only a few who, like the stars in a tempestuous night, shine here and there among the clouds. . . . {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 20}

"Many have exalted science, and lost sight of the God of science. This was not the case with the church in the purest times. {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 21}

"God will work a work in our day that but few anticipate. He will raise up and exalt among us those who are taught rather by the unction of his Spirit, than by the outward training of scientific institutions. These facilities are not to be despised or condemned; they are ordained of God, but they can furnish only the exterior qualifications. God will manifest that he is not dependent on learned, self-important mortals." {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 22}

In connection with these quotations, study again the article "The Nature and Influence of the Testimonies," in Vol. V, No. 33, pages 654-691. Mrs. E. G. White. (To be concluded)  
{RH, August 30, 1906 par. 23}

## **“Correct Views Concerning the Testimonies: A Reply to an Inquirer” [Part 2]**

*Review and Herald*, September 6, 1906 (Concluded)

The statement which you quote from "Testimony," No. 31, that "in these letters which I wrote, in the Testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper, expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision -- the precious rays of light shining from the throne," is correct. It is true concerning the articles in our papers and in the many volumes of my books. I have been instructed in accordance with the Word in the precepts of the law of God. I have been instructed in selecting from the lessons of Christ. Are not the positions taken in my writings in harmony with the teachings of Jesus Christ? If not, point it out to me. {RH, September 6, 1906 par. 1}

To some of the questions you have asked, I am not to answer Yes or No. I must not make statements

that can be misconstrued. I see and feel the peril of those who I have been instructed were endangering their souls at times by listening to deceptive representations regarding the messages that God has given me. Through many twistings and turnings and false reasonings on what I have written, they seek to vindicate their personal unbelief. I am sorry for my brethren who have been walking in the mist of suspicion and skepticism and false reasoning. I know that some of them would be blessed by messages of counsel if the clouds obscuring their spiritual vision could be driven back, and they could see aright. But they do not see clearly. Therefore I dare not communicate with them. {RH, September 6, 1906 par. 2}

When the Spirit of God clears away the mysticism, there will be found just as complete comfort and faith and hope in the messages that I have been instructed to give as were found in them in years past. {RH, September 6, 1906 par. 3}

Truth will surely bear away the victory. One who gave His life to ransom man from the delusions of Satan is not asleep, but watching. When his sheep turn away from following the voice of a stranger whose sheep they are not, they will rejoice in the life of Christ. The envious Pharisees misinterpreted the acts and words of Christ, which, if properly received, would have been beneficial to their spiritual understanding. Instead of admiring his goodness, they charged him, in the presence of his disciples, with impiety-- "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" Instead of addressing our blessed Saviour himself, whose answer would at once have convicted them of their malice, they talked with the disciples, and made their charges where, as a leaven of evil, they would do great harm. If Christ had been an impious man he would have lost his hold upon the hearts of his believing followers. But because of their confidence in Christ, the disciples would not give ear to the insinuations of his wicked accusers. {RH, September 6, 1906 par. 4}

Desiring to bring censure upon the disciples, these wicked accusers went again and again to Christ with the question, Why do thy disciples that which is not lawful? And when they judged our Lord to have transgressed, they spoke not to himself, but to his disciples, to plant the seeds of unbelief in the hearts of his followers. Thus they worked to bring in doubt and dissension. Every method was tried to bring doubt into the hearts of the little flock, that it might cause them to watch for something that would check the good and gracious work of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Work of this same character will be brought to bear upon true believers today. The Lord Jesus reads the heart; he discerns the intents and purposes of the thoughts of all men concerning himself and his believing disciples. He answers their thoughts concerning the fault-finding ones. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." The insolent Pharisees had an exalted idea of their own piety and holiness, while they were ready to pass censure on the lives of others. {RH, September 6, 1906 par. 5}

On one occasion those who were guilty of many secret sins, brought to Christ a woman who had been taken in sin. They thought that he would pronounce judgment against her, and then they could accuse him of taking judgment into his own hands. While they were presenting the case, Christ was busy writing on the sand. He said nothing, and when they pressed him for a decision, he was in no hurry to pronounce judgment. One after another came near to him to see what he was writing, and there in the sand they saw the record of their own sins. Then Christ said to them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone." But not a stone was cast, and they went away, leaving the woman with him. He said to her, "Where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord." Christ answered, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." {RH, September 6, 1906 par. 6}

The Lord Jesus beheld the whole plot and the arrogance of the ones who had arranged it, who were worthy of condemnation and punishment, and when they saw that he knew their lives, they left and went out, having failed in their desire to bring about the condemnation of Christ. {RH, September 6, 1906 par. 7}

Let no one complain. True religion is free from the exaltation of self. If we have not a sense of our interest, heart and mind and soul, in our Saviour, if we have not the grace and the intelligent Bible knowledge to apply to ourselves his merits and disposition of character, through the merits of the atonement, we shall obtain no ease, on assurance. {RH, September 6, 1906 par. 8}

Bear in mind that it is none but God that can hold an argument with Satan. The sentiments of the enemy are to be met with a plain "Thus saith the Lord." Human infirmity, I am instructed, will not be able to resist the devil. Always keep aloof from secret science. If the mind is once open to this evil, Satan has the mastery. Flee from this unequal conflict. Let it ever be our individual care to keep clear of Satan's mysterious devisings. He will ever be making efforts to give power to secret science by which to

overcome us, and then follows the sin of secret disobedience. {RH, September 6, 1906 par. 9}

The law of the Lord is to be written on the heart. If it is not, we never obey it in truth. I am having deeply impressed upon my mind the history of the children of Israel while the awful presence of God was before them, as recorded in Ex. 19:16. "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice." {RH, September 6, 1906 par. 10}

This was the all-important occasion when God and angels came from heaven to the armies of Israel. Here was the law spoken in awful solemnity. The Lord God manifested himself to his people who were delivered out of Egyptian bondage. But this very people, while waiting before the mount for Moses to return, were tempted to doubt, by the suggestion of some that perplexities were arising, and notwithstanding the most solemn impressions that had been recently made upon their minds, they now by their attitude of questioning and doubt, invited the tempter to come in as an honored guest. Growing doubt soon led to a demand for a substitute for Moses. {RH, September 6, 1906 par. 11}

Only a few days before, the presence of the Lord was manifest in such power that they were terribly afraid and asked that Moses might hear the words of God, and then speak the same to them. But now they wanted something present that they could depend upon. {RH, September 6, 1906 par. 12}

They might, at this time, have been learning precious lessons, which the Lord was ready to give them, if they had trusted fully in him. But the result of their murmurings and unbelief was that Aaron made them a golden calf to represent God. He proclaimed this idol to be God, and a great deal of enthusiasm was created over this false god. If instead of doing this, he had called to mind the wonderful deliverance which God had wrought for them, and every mind had been drawn upon to express gratitude to God for all his rich mercies in delivering his people from Egyptian bondage, they might have been placed on vantage-ground, to glorify the Lord God who had wrought such wonderful deliverance from degradation and slavery. Mrs. E. G. White. {RH, September 6, 1906, par. 13}

### **Appendix C: "Beyond Finite Comprehension"**

There are some that may think they are fully capable with their finite judgment to take the Word of God, and to state what are the words of inspiration, and what are not the words of inspiration. I want to warn you off that ground, my brethren in the ministry. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." There is no finite man that lives, I care not who he is or whatever is his position, that God has authorized to pick and choose in His Word.

. . . God's infinity is so much higher than we are, that it is impossible for man to comprehend the mystery of godliness. . . . We cannot grasp it, so what man is there that dares to take that Bible and say this part is inspired and that part is not inspired? I would have both my arms taken off at my shoulders before I would ever make the statement or set my judgment upon the Word of God as to what is inspired and what is not inspired.

How would finite man know anything about that matter? He is to take the Word of God as it reads, and then to appreciate it as it is, and to bring it into the life and to weave it into the character. There is everything plainly revealed in God's Word which concerns the salvation of men, and if we will take that Word and comprehend it to the very best of our ability, God will help us in its comprehension. . . .

Never attempt to search the Scriptures unless you are ready to listen, unless you are ready to be a learner, unless you are ready to listen to the Word of God as though His voice were speaking directly to you from the living oracles. Never let mortal man sit in judgment upon the Word of God or pass sentence as to how much of this is inspired and how much is not inspired, and that this is more inspired than some other portions. God warns him off that ground. God has not given him any such work to do (MS 13, 1888, in 7BC 919).