

## A Quick View of the Life of Christ Research Project (1980-1988) By Kevin L. Morgan

### Introduction

In 1980, as a result of Dr. Walter Rea's discovery of striking similarities between her writings and those of other authors, Mrs. Ellen G. White joined the "Who's Who" of high-profile authors accused of plagiarism.[1] The list includes such notables as Rudyard Kipling, Edgar Allan Poe, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Richard Henry Dana,[2] and even William Shakespeare.[3]

In that same year, Dr. Fred Veltman, Ph.D., chairman of the religion department of Pacific Union College and expert in language and source analysis, launched what was intended to be a six-month literary study of *The Desire of Ages*. As he told me later, his interest was not to prove or disprove the charge of plagiarism, but to get a realistic handle on the extent of Ellen White's borrowing of literary expressions in *The Desire of Ages* from the writings of authors who had preceded her. (The thought of literary borrowing by inspired writers was not troubling to Dr. Veltman since he had studied the same issue before in relation to Biblical writers.)

In setting up the project, Dr. Veltman faced a monumental task.[4] How was he to obtain the probable source works that were no longer all in one place? Of the 1200 works in the private and office libraries of Ellen White at the time of her death,[5] perhaps 75 of them relate to the four Gospels in some way. Approximately 50 more were devotional, inspirational books (including sermons) that could contain material relating to certain portions of *The Desire of Ages*. To perform a thorough evaluation of possible sources, Dr. Veltman would need to obtain as many of these as possible—first at the White Estate Office and then at libraries across the country. The pursuit of these books was on!

Obtaining 40 works of the most familiar authors—which included William Hanna, Daniel March, John Harris, George Jones, Alfred Edersheim, Frederick W. Farrar, Robert Boyd, John R. Macduff, Andrew Murray, Samuel J. Andrews, and Cunningham Geikie—was only the beginning. Over the span of the next eight years, the researchers would obtain and search through more than 500 works! (Those who would suggest that there were likely many more sources of parallels than those identified are simply unaware of the exhaustive nature of this investigation![6]) It was the duty of Marcella Anderson, Dr. Veltman's research assistant, to peruse each volume and pick out the portions relating to *The Desire of Ages* chapters under investigation.

With this kind of comprehensive study, it soon became apparent that a thorough investigation of all 87 chapters of *The Desire of Ages* would simply not be feasible under the time and financial constraints of the project. It was decided that a carefully selected representative number of chapters would work just as well in making valid generalizations about the book. Because Walter Rea had asserted that longer chapters would be found to have more borrowing than shorter ones, Dr. Veltman divided the book into three groups, according to length: 29 long chapters; 29 short chapters; and 29

middle-length ones. From each of these three categories, five chapters were randomly selected by two professors of the Pacific Union College Mathematics Department, Dr. Richard Rockwell and Dr. A. Keith Anderson. (This was to avert any complaints that a chapter had been selected because it was known to have a smaller or larger number of parallels.) Chapters 10, 14, 37, 72, and 75 were selected from the long chapters; chapters 3, 13, 46, 56, 83 from the short chapters; and chapters 24, 39, 53, 76, and 84 from the middle-length chapters. Since Walter Rea had also asserted that the earlier "life of Christ" treatises by Ellen White had a smaller percentage of borrowing than *The Desire of Ages*, Dr. Veltman decided to perform the research necessary to settle this issue as well. (Both of Walter Rea's assertions were proved false.)

To further conserve resources, Dr. Veltman recruited volunteer readers. Each volunteer was assigned one or two chapters of *The Desire of Ages*, plus chapter 75, which was the control chapter that insured consistent application of method. In addition to their assigned *Desire of Ages* chapters, each volunteer was to read the portions of the possible source works relating to those chapters. Reports from their reading were compiled under the corresponding *Desire of Ages* chapter, whether or not source parallels had been found. The readers' goal was to find as many literary parallels as possible between the source works and *The Desire of Ages* chapters. If any book did not yield parallels to *The Desire of Ages*, it could be ruled out as a source work. (In the course of study, readers unofficially covered all the chapters in *The Desire of Ages* and discovered that there were actually five chapters that were parallel free.)

It is common knowledge that Ellen White made use of literary helpers in producing her books and periodical articles. *The Desire of Ages* was a revision of the life of Christ account in *Spirit of Prophecy*, volumes 2 and 3, published in the 1870s, with additional materials written by Mrs. White. In order to find the materials of Mrs. White that had been used in *The Desire of Ages*, Dr. Veltman and Marcella Anderson combed through Ellen White's periodical articles, her books published before 1898 (*The Desire of Ages* having been published late that year), her personal diaries and letters, and her handwritten manuscripts and transcripts on the life of Christ. However, they did not make use of the *Spiritual Gifts* life of Christ material. (More on this later.) Dr. Veltman was granted free access to the E. G. White files at the White Estate. From these files he brought back reams of unpublished materials. Marcella Anderson reviewed these manuscripts and catalogued them according to the chapters of *The Desire of Ages*, retyping the most pertinent portions that had to do with Ellen White's writings on the life of Christ, her use of literary helpers and writing methods, and the issues of inspiration and revelation. If the work of Ellen White were to be isolated from that of her editors, it would be necessary to have her handwritten supporting manuscripts. Though only chapters 14, 24, and 75 of *The Desire of Ages* had any handwritten documentary support, the chapters in *Spirit of Prophecy*, volumes 2 and 3, upon which chapters 3, 10, 13, and 14 of *The Desire of Ages* were built, did have corresponding handwritten manuscripts. These supportive manuscripts, which related to the fifteen research chapters, were not sent out to the volunteer readers, but were examined for source parallels by Dr. Veltman, Dr. J. Paul Stauffer (part-time researcher), and E. Marcella Anderson.

### Summary of literary dependency for the fifteen chapters

In order to assign a relative numeric value to the level of literary dependency for each chapter, Dr. Veltman determined that sentences (and not words) would be the basic unit of evaluation. Each sentence would be assigned a number according to its relative level of dependency from seven down to zero—7 for *strict verbatim* (V1), 6 for *not so strict verbatim* (V2), 5 for *strict paraphrase* (P1), 4 for *simple paraphrase* (P2), 3 for *loose paraphrase* (P3), and 2 for *Bible used same as in source* (B1), 1 for *partial independent* (I2), 0 for *strict independent* (I1) and *Bible references* (B2). With each sentence being assigned a number, an average level of literary dependency could be calculated and the literary dependency of the rest of the book could be reliably projected.

Dr. Veltman arbitrarily designated each work that was demonstrated to have parallel material to *The Desire of Ages* as either a major or minor source. "Major" meant that a work had more than ten sentences that paralleled material in a given *Desire of Ages* chapter; "minor" meant it had less than ten. Based on these criteria, there were ten major source works that Ellen White likely consulted in writing the selected 15 chapters of the *Desire of Ages* covered in the research project, a major source work tending to dominate in each of the chapters. The major sources are, in order of descending use in the chapters: *The Life of Christ* by William Hanna; *Night Scenes of the Bible* by Daniel March; *The Great Teacher* by John Harris; *The Life of Christ* by Frederic Farrar; *Walks and Homes of Jesus* by Daniel March; *Life-Scenes from the Four Gospels* by George Jones; *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* by Alfred Edersheim; *The Prince of the House of David* by J. H. Ingraham; *Salvation by Christ* by Francis Wayland; and *Sabbath Evening Readings on the New Testament, St. John* by John Cumming.

What percentage of the text of *The Desire of Ages* shows evidence of being influenced by any of the sources? Dr. Veltman answered in the summary of the report:

For those looking for some percentage of dependency I think it is safe to say that about 31 percent of the *DA* text measured *some degree of literary dependency* and about 61 percent registered independence. The rest represents the use of Scripture.

The rate of dependency ... averages out at 3.33 or at the level of *Loose Paraphrase* when viewing the degree of dependency for dependent sentences. ... When looking at the average dependency rate for an entire chapter, including the independent sentences, the rate drops to 1.12 or about the level of *Partial Independence*. [7]

In other words, "there are twice as many independent sentences as there are dependent sentences," [8] and the majority of the sentences considered to have verbal similarity followed their supposed sources rather loosely. It should be noted that, for a sentence to have "some degree of literary dependency," it only had to have *one dependent*—but not always *verbatim*—word. (For examples of dependent sentences without a single verbatim word besides articles and conjunctions, see Veltman, 1988, pp. 9, 14, 25, 30, 72, 74, and 83.)

A careful reading of Dr. Veltman's 2,222-page written report [9] reveals that he often established dependency for loosely paraphrased sentences by correlating *The Desire of Ages* text to patterns of parallel verbatim words and similar phrasing in the underlying pre-*DA* materials available to Marian Davis for revising the *Spirit of Prophecy* chapters on the life of Christ. Such pre-*DA* materials include Ellen White's earlier books, manuscripts, journals, letters, and periodical articles on the subject. In the process of changing verb forms and dropping unnecessary words for incorporation into the text of *The Desire of Ages*, many of the verbatim clues disappear. [10] We could liken the pattern of verbatim words and similar phrasing in her manuscripts to a connect-the-dots drawing that has been photocopied with such a light setting that it is just barely distinguishable. It is the opinion of this writer that such a vague image formed by verbatim words and similar phrasing is consonant with W. C. White's description of his mother's use of life of Christ writings—that is, that she used these writings in keeping to the storyline of the Gospels and in jogging her memory about what was vividly revealed to her in vision. That she should occasionally mirror some of their verbatim wording as she used their works to remember essential parts of the story would only seem natural.

The great events occurring in the life of our Lord were presented to her in panoramic scenes as also were other portions of *The Great Controversy*. In a few of these scenes chronology and geography were clearly presented, but in the greater part of the revelation the flashlight scenes, which were *exceedingly vivid*, and the conversations and the controversies, which she heard and was able to narrate, were not marked geographically or chronologically, and she was left to study the Bible and history, and the writings of men who had presented the life of our Lord to get the chronological and geographical connection.

Another purpose served by the reading of history and the *Life of Our Lord* [likely William Hanna's *Life of Christ* (1863) under an alternate title] ... was that in so doing there was brought vividly to her mind scenes presented clearly in vision, but which were, through the lapse of years and her strenuous ministry, dimmed in her memory. Many times in the reading of Hanna, Farrar, or Fleetwood, she would run on to a description of a scene which had been vividly presented to her, but forgotten, and which she was able to describe more in detail than that which she had read.[11]

It should be noted that *none* of the fifteen random chapters covered in the Life of Christ Research Project had any "strict verbatim" sentences, and that *six* of the fifteen—chapters 10, 13, 53, 56, 72, and 76—did not have any of the less strict V2 adapted "verbatim," defined by Dr. Veltman as a verbatim sentence having "slight modification of word forms, incidental word substitutions or punctuation changes." Much of the "verbatim" represents only a piece of a sentence in either the "source" or in *The Desire of Ages* text. The *current* standard for use of quotation marks is the borrowing of *five or more consecutive verbatim words*. By that standard, very few of the "verbatim" would require footnoting even today (marked here by « and »). Looking at the awkwardness of what ends up being marked, one wonders what the advantage of such marking would be. The following sentences are marked for similarity—**green for Scriptural wording**, **red for verbatim**, and **blue for paraphrase**. Solid underlining between words designates consecutive wording.

### All the "verbatim" sentences noted in the study

#### V2 - Modified verbatims (dependency rating, 6)

Chap. 3 (1 V2 sentence out of 130 sentence units)

▶ "The fullness of the time had come." DA 34.4.

*Supposed source:* "When, in the fulness of time, the eternal Son came forth from the bosom of the Father, he descended to a region of spiritual darkness." John Harris, *The Great Teacher*, 49.

*Comment:* Perhaps this should have been identified as a **B2**, since the quotation follows Galatians 4:4 more closely than Harris: "But when the fulness of the time was come, ..."

Chap. 14 (5 V2 sentences out of 250 sentence units)

▶ "Again the face of the prophet was lighted up with glory from the Unseen, as he cried, 'Behold the Lamb of God!'" DA 138.4.

*Possible source:* "On the following day, while two of John's disciples were standing near by, Jesus came, in sight, and the Baptist's face again took the glow of inspiration, as he cried: 'Behold the Lamb of God!'" George Jones, *Life-Scenes from the Four Gospels*, 96.

*Comment:* This "verbatim" is more of a paraphrase, with the words of John taken from John 1:29, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

▶ "The words thrilled the hearts of the disciples." DA 138.4.

*Likely source:* "The two disciples, how they were thrilled by the words!" Jones, *LSFG* 96.

*Comment:* Here Ellen White adapts Jones's expanded paraphrase of John 1:37: "And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus," possibly conflating the word "heart" from a similar description in Luke 24:32: "... Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?")

▶ "Philip entered into no controversy." DA 140.3

*Likely source:* "The reply of Philip is every way observable. He entered on no controversy, he attempted no discussion; he felt that the means which had been effectual with himself were most likely to be effectual with Nathanael; ..." Henry Melvill, *The Golden Lectures*, 81.

*Comment:* Four verbatim words from two sentences of 36+ words.

▶ "If you believe on Me as such, your faith shall be quickened." DA 142.4.

*Likely source:* "Believe what that sign was meant to confirm; believe in me as the lamb of God, the Saviour of the world, the baptizer with the Holy Ghost, and your eye of faith shall be quickened ..." William Hanna, *Life of Christ*, 108.0a.

*Comment:* Eight verbatim words from the first 35 words of a 99-word sentence.

▶ "I have opened them to you." DA 142.4.

*Likely source:* "... and you shall see those heavens standing continually open above my head—opened by me for you; ..." Hanna, 108.0b

*Comment:* Two verbatim words out of the next 17 words of a 99-word sentence!

#### Chap. 24 (1 V2 sentence out of 153 sentence units)

▶ "They hurried him to the brow of a precipice, intending to cast him down headlong." DA 240.1.

*Source:* "... they hurry him forth to the brow of a precipice, near by the synagogue, that they may cast him down headlong." Daniel March, *Walks and Homes of Jesus*, 61.

*Comment:* Ellen White may have taken "hurried" and "precipice" from March, but what she is here borrowing is a colorful paraphrase of Luke 4:29—"And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong."

#### Chap. 37 (5 V2 sentences out of 217 sentence units)

▶ "Where He had passed, the objects of His compassion were rejoicing in health, and «making trial of their new-found powers»." DA 350.3

*Source:* "Where he had passed, the restored might be seen, making trial of their new-found powers; listeners, formed into groups to hear the tale of healing; and the delighted objects of his compassion, rehearsing, with earnestness, what had passed, imitating his tones, and even trying to convey an idea of his condescending ways." Harris, *TGT* 343.

▶ "«His voice was the first sound» that many had ever heard, «His name the first word they had» ever spoken, His face the first they ever looked upon."

Source: "His voice was the first sound which many of them heard; his name the first word they had pronounced, his blessed form the first sight they had ever beheld." Harris, *TGT* 343.

Comment: 10 verbatim words out of a 52-word sentence.

► "As He passed through the towns and cities He was like a vital current, diffusing life and joy wherever He went." *DA* 350.3.

Source: "He went through the land like a current of vital air, an element of life, diffusing health and joy wherever he appeared." Harris, *TGT* 343.

► "And «more than angels are in» the ranks." *DA* 352.2.

Likely source: "... he reminds them that they struggle for an invisible world, that they fight in the fellowship ... with all the children of light, that more than angels are in their ranks." Harris, *TGT* xlv.

Comment: 6 verbatim words out of a 59-word sentence.

► "Every soul was precious in His eyes." *DA* 353.1.

Source: "Every scrap of humanity was sacred and precious in his eyes." James R. Miller, *Week-Day Religion*, 187.

Comment: Ellen White adapts the language of Miller to comment on Matt. 12:20, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." Miller says: "He was utterly incapable of rudeness"; Ellen White says: "He was never rude." Ellen White corrects Miller's use of "scrap of humanity" and "sacred and precious," describing every "soul," as "precious" but not "sacred." [12]

#### Chap. 39 (1 V2 sentence out of 158 sentence units)

► "We are not to plunge into difficulties, neglecting the means God has provided, and misusing the faculties He has given us." *DA* 369.1.

Source: "When we plunge ourselves into difficulty, by a neglect of the means or by a misuse of the faculties which God has bestowed upon us, it is to be expected that he will leave us to our own devices." Francis Wayland, *Salvation by Christ*, 246.

#### Chap. 46 (2 V2 sentences out of 89 sentence units)

► "The Saviour and his disciples have spent the day in traveling and teaching, and the mountain climb adds to their weariness." *DA* 419.1.

Source: "He has spent the day in travel, and in teaching, and this mountain climb at night adds a heavy weight to weariness that demanded rest before the evening came." March, *WHJ* 150.

► "The disciples do not venture to ask Christ «whither He is going, or for what purpose»." *DA* 419.3.

Source: "They do not ask him whither he is going, or for what purpose, he leads them away to the solitude of the mountain—just as night is setting in, and they all need repose and protection in the homes which they have left behind." March, *WHJ* 151.

▶ "Christ was to be tried formally, before the Sanhedrin; but before Annas He was subjected to a preliminary trial." DA 698.3.

*Likely source:* "It was in this hall, and before Annas, that Jesus was subjected to that preliminary informal examination recorded in the eighteenth chapter of the gospel of St. John, ver. 19–24. He was to be formally tried, with show at least of law, before the Sanhedrim, the highest of the Jewish courts; but this could not be done at once." Hanna, 663.

*Comment:* 15 verbatim words out of a 58-word sentence.

▶ "Their own rules declared that every man should be treated as innocent until proved guilty." DA 699.2.

*Likely source:* "But He would not repeat it, in spite of their insistence, because He knew that it was open to their wilful misinterpretation, and because they were acting in flagrant violation of their own express rules and traditions, which demand, that every arraigned criminal should be regarded and treated as innocent until his guilt was actually proved." Farrar, *Life of Christ*, 615.

*Comment:* 13 verbatim words out of a 56-word sentence.

▶ "And He «suffered in proportion to the perfection of His holiness» and His hatred for sin." DA 700.3.

*Source:* "... 'he suffered, being tempted,'—suffered in proportion to the perfection of his holiness, and the depth of his aversion to sin; but though his residence in an atmosphere of sin was revolting to his purity, though the presence of depravity made his continuance here a perpetual sacrifice, his love induced him to submit, ..." Harris, *TGT* 340.

*Comment:* 12 verbatim words out of a 100-word sentence!

▶ "Of all the throng He alone was calm and serene." DA 704.0.

*Possible source:* "He alone, of all that countless host, He alone was calm—serene—fearless!" J. H. Ingraham, *The Prince of the House of David*, 360.

*Comment:* The source, published in 1888, was not listed in Ellen White's libraries. "Serene" was used in 3SP 129.1; "calm" in Farrar 635.

▶ "Caiaphas was desperate." DA 706.1.

*Possible source:* "On this Caiaphas became desperate, and adopted a resource which our own rules of evidence would declare most infamous, and which was also wholly adverse to the first principles of Mosaic jurisprudence and the like of which occurs in no circumstance of Hebrew history." John Kitto, *Daily Bible Illustrations*, 408.

*Comment:* Two verbatim words out of 44 words in the source.

▶ "There was a time to be silent, and a time to speak." DA 706.4.

*Possible source:* "There is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence." Joseph Hall, *Scripture History; or Contemplations on the Historical Passages of the Old and New Testaments*, 575.

*Comment:* Both sentences are paraphrases of the last part of Ecclesiastes 3:7—" . . . a time to keep silence, and a time to speak," and Ellen White uses the Biblical order of the phrases.

**Chap. 83** (4 V2 sentences out of 116 sentence units)

▶ "During the journey the sun had gone down, and before the travelers reached their place of rest, the laborers in the fields had left their work." DA 800.2.

*Source:* "The sun has gone down behind the gray hill-tops, and the shadows of evening have begun to deepen in the narrow valleys, and the laborers have left the terraced orchards and vineyards on the hill-sides before the two travelers reach their home." March, *Night Scenes*, 417f.

▶ "Christ never forces His company upon anyone." DA 800.3.

*Source:* "He never forces himself upon any." March, *NS* 418.

▶ "Now He puts forth His hands to bless the food." DA 800.4.

*Source:* "When bread, the simple fare of the poor, was set before them, he put forth his hands to bless it." March, *NS* 418.

▶ "The disciples start back in astonishment." DA 800.4.

*Source:* "But what now so suddenly startles the wondering disciples?" March, *NS* 419.

*Comment:* Two verbatim words out of 9 in the source. This sentence is more of a paraphrase than a verbatim.

**Chap. 84** (4 V2 sentences out of 138 sentence units)

▶ "Every eye is fastened upon the Stranger." DA 802.2.

*Source:* "Every eye is fixed upon the stranger." March, *NS* 422.

▶ "No footstep has been heard." DA 802.2f.

*Source:* "No sound of entering footsteps has been heard." March, *NS* 422.

▶ "The Holy Spirit was not yet fully manifested; for Christ had not yet been glorified." DA 805.2.

*Possible source:* "The Holy Ghost was not yet in his fulness given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Hanna, *LC* 806.

*Comment:* Ellen White paraphrases while Hanna loosely quotes John 7:39: "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." As such, it is "community property."

▶ "The doubting disciple knew that none of his companions had seen Jesus for a week." DA 807.3.

*Possible source:* "Thomas knew that for seven days none of the disciples had seen the Lord." Hanna, *LC* 817.



*Comment:* This sentence is more of a paraphrase than a verbatim.

Carefully examining these 28 sentences, we see that "modified verbatim sentence" doesn't mean that a whole verbatim sentence was taken from a source with only slight modification; it means that, at most, a verbatim phrase in a sentence was taken from a source with only slight modification or that a new shorter sentence was composed of mostly verbatim words taken from a longer sentence.

### First instance of each other category of dependent sentences

#### P1 - Strict paraphrase (dependency rating, 5) 183 sentences out of 2624.

► "In his manner and dress he resembled the prophet Elijah." DA 104.3.

*Likely source:* "... a large gathering of excited people around a man of singular, appearance, who was making a most wonderful announcement, and was engaging in a baptismal rite of startling significance. He was a gaunt ascetic; in his dress and manner, and in his authoritative language, reminding all who saw and heard him of the old prophet; and indeed, in his appearance so much resembling Elijah, that the query was immediately started in every man's mind, whether he was not actually that prophet risen from the dead." Jones, *LSFG* 3.

*Comment:* Like the "modified verbatims" above, a "strict paraphrase" can also be the extraction of a phrase or two from a much longer sentence, as long as its components mean the same as the parallels in the source.

#### P2 - Simple paraphrase (dependency rating, 4) 256 sentences.

► "One language was widely spoken, and was everywhere recognized as the language of literature." DA 32.2.

*Likely source:* "When we further consider that there was, as it were, one universal language, superseding by its copiousness and fulness all others,—the language of literature, of cultivation, of the arts, and of trade and commerce:—we easily—see that the whole world had almost become one family:" Thayer, *Sketches from the Life of Jesus, Historical and Doctrinal*, 21.

*Comment:* The difference between *strict* paraphrase and *simple* paraphrase is that, in addition to saying basically the same thing as the source, *simple* paraphrase sentences have an additional thought. In this example, it is the uniqueness of a parallel phrase that points to a possible link to a source. This category was, by far, the largest category of literary parallels in the study.

#### P3 - Loose paraphrase (dependency rating, 3) 93 sentences.

► "The nations were united under one government." DA 32.2.

*Likely source:* "While the dominion of Rome so oppressed the nations; it yet unified the world, and harmonized it into the semblance of one family." Thayer, *SLJ* 21.

*Comment:* Ellen White very loosely expresses the same general idea as Thayer. However, without the previously identified parallel phrase, "language of literature," under *simple* paraphrase, it would be difficult to certify that Mrs. White's statement was derived from Thayer. (It should be noted that the sentences she supposedly paraphrased from Thayer in this chapter do not follow Thayer's order.)

#### B1 - Source Bible (dependency rating, 2) 84 sentences.

► "In 'the region and shadow of death,' men sat unsolaced. [Matt. 4:16]" DA 32.4.

*Possible source:* "... what must have been the wishes and aspirations of [those who](#), with a keen perception of their exigence [urgency], [were sitting](#) in darkness and the [shadow of death](#)?" Harris, *TGT* 51.

*Comment:* One might question the uniqueness of quoting Matthew 4:16 in an introductory chapter on the life of Christ. Most other **B1**'s are more striking.

## **I2 - Partial independent (dependency rating, 1) 178 sentences.**

► "From the days of Enoch [the promise](#) was repeated through [patriarchs](#) and prophets, keeping alive [the hope of appearing](#), and yet He came not." *DA* 31.2.

*Possible source:* "We remember the [Patriarch](#)'s remark, that 'Judah's sceptre should not depart [till Shiloh come](#);' we remember [the promise](#) of an eternal dominion to the family of David: and still more vividly shines, the vision of Daniel." Kennedy, *Messianic Prophecy, and the Life of Christ*.

*Comment:* With this "partial independent," we have only one significant strictly verbatim word, "promise," which was used by Ellen White to refer to Enoch and by Kennedy to refer to Genesis 49:10. To the 178 sentences of this category we can add 1612 "strictly independent" sentences and 189 non-dependent Bible quotations, making a total of 1979 sentences showing independence from the sources—75% of the 2624 sentence units.

Looking at the "dependent" sentences in the sampling we have considered, one is left wondering how most of the borrowed expressions could be appropriately marked or footnoted—even by today's standards. More than this, the sentences of the largest category of "paraphrases" say basically the same thing as their source, though with an original thought. Even the modified "verbatim" demonstrate originality, as Mrs. White[13] composed new meaningful sentences from select verbatim words and phrases in the sources. We also see that a large number of dependent sentences are paraphrases of Scripture, borrowed from another author to tell the Gospel story with a little more color.

### **An evolving concept of literary property**

Since the time of the original study, we have had opportunity to discover some interesting things about literary borrowing among the other authors who wrote on the life of Christ. We have discovered, for example, in a comparison of book chapters paralleling *The Desire of Ages* chapter 58,[14] that Daniel March, who was one of the more readable writers, used expressions from earlier works without acknowledgment as frequently as Ellen White, and that Farrar, Geikie, and Edersheim borrowed more frequently than either Daniel March or Ellen White.

Why wasn't this considered plagiarism? For one thing, the concept of literary property was evolving during this period. At the beginning of the 1800s, "nineteenth-century literary ethics, even among the best writers, approved of, or at least did not seriously question, generous literary borrowing without giving credit." [15] By the mid-1800s, opinions had begun to change.

The more readers and writers revered "originality" as an absolute artistic virtue, the more the spectre of guilt floated over the "influenced" writer's horizon.[16]

One can detect a proliferating concern with plagiarism in the mid-nineteenth century. ... American writers of the antebellum period were attempting to work out the limitations and the possibilities of proprietary authorship ...[17]

For another thing, the phrases that the various life of Christ authors were borrowing are what one might consider to be "community property." In our study of chapters 77 and 78 (which were not chapters selected for the original research project), we discovered that, among life of Christ authors, there appears to be something of a common pool of vocabulary from which life of Christ authors drew in telling the story of Jesus' trial. They speak of the "vacillating" Pilate,[18] of Pilate's considering Jesus a "religious enthusiast,"[19] of Jesus answering "not a word,"[20] of the "curiosity" of Herod and Pilate,[21] of Pilate's wife's "warning,"[22] of the condemnation of Jesus as an "innocent man,"[23] of the "burden of the cross,"[24] of the "robber and murderer" Barabbas,[25] of the "place of execution,"[26] of the "stupefying potion"[27] offered Jesus, of those "at the foot of the cross,"[28] of the "penitent thief," and of Jesus' "ignominious death." [29] Such expressions appear to be a type of "community property" that was used without necessity of acknowledgment. For another thing, many of the verbatim words in sentences considered to be parallel sentences are from Scripture. Dr. Veltman noted this overlapping of phrasing among sources:

At times the parallels between the sources were so strong that we had difficulty deciding which one Ellen White was using.[30]

If it was so difficult to decide which source Ellen White may have used, could there not have been another explanation for the verbal similarity between works besides the intentional lifting of a word here and there from various sources? An answer to this question can be found as we explore the original composition of *The Desire of Ages* and what its dependency means.

### **The composition of *The Desire of Ages***

We know from her own testimony and from that of her assistants that Ellen White did not sit down with blank paper and write out from the first page of *The Desire of Ages* to the last the things contained in the final form of the book. Although Mrs. White did write numerous fresh manuscripts on various subjects in preparation for the book, such material was only used, with choice expressions from Mrs. White's articles, letters, and journals, to replace the wording of the earlier-written *Spirit of Prophecy* chapters on the life of Christ. The enhanced volume was to be sold to the general Christian readership. Both Marian Davis and Mrs. White describe Marian's assembling of copies of Mrs. White's writings in scrapbook form so that Marian would have material from which to freshen the earlier narrative. When the chapters were completed, Mrs. White always "read over all that is copied to see that everything is as it should be. [She also] read all the book manuscript before it is sent to the printer." [31] Why was such a method of composition necessary?

Up until the 1870s, James White had assisted his wife in the editing of her writings. During the early 1870s, Mrs. White indicates that she faced a crisis brought on by her husband's declining health and his consequent inability to help her in the preparation of her writings.

We rose early to prepare to go to San Francisco. My heart is inexpressibly sad. This morning I take into candid consideration my writings. My husband is too feeble to help me prepare them for the printer, therefore I shall do no more with them at present. I am not a scholar. I cannot prepare my own writings for the press. Until I can do this I shall write no more. It is not my duty to tax others with my manuscript. (Friday, January 10, 1873).[32]

We rested well last night. This Sabbath morning opens cloudy. My mind is coming to strange conclusions. I am thinking I must lay aside my writing I have taken so much pleasure in, and see if I cannot become a scholar. I am not a grammarian. I will try, if the Lord will help me, at forty-five years old to become a scholar in the science [of writing]. God will help me. I believe He will. (San Francisco, Saturday, January 11, 1873).[\[33\]](#)

Keenly sensing her lack of education (only three years of formal schooling) and her deficiency in putting into words what she had been called to write,[\[34\]](#) Mrs. White turned to the language of more gifted writers to help her express her thoughts.

Notwithstanding all the power that God had given her to present scenes in the lives of Christ and His apostles and His prophets and His reformers in a stronger and more telling way than other historians, ... she always felt most keenly the results of her lack of school education. She admired the language in which other writers had presented to their readers the scenes which God had presented to her in vision, and she found it both a pleasure and a convenience and an economy of time to use their language fully or in part in presenting those things which she knew through revelation, and which she wished to pass on to her readers.[\[35\]](#)

Some of this language she gathered in her free-form journals.

Ellen White maintained extensive diaries or journals. Not only did she (generally) keep daily records but often she amplified her thoughts, seemingly without any particular reason except to let her mind flow out on paper. These entries included both personal impressions and thoughts from her reading. At such times, without any attempt to organize under specific headings, Mrs. White copied or paraphrased those items from her extensive reading that she wanted to remember. From these journals her editorial assistants would gather material for periodical articles. As time passed, many of these early jottings became part of her published books.[\[36\]](#)

Evidence of her scrapbooks can be seen in an 1877 letter addressed to her children:

Do not neglect to send my selections for I want them to use. Send my scrap books also.[\[37\]](#)

That Ellen White would gather from the writings of others should not surprise us. Ellen White was, after all, a consummate gatherer. In her cupboard stocking "bank," she saved up enough coins to print an edition of *The Review* in 1852. From various periodicals she collected character-building stories for publication in the "Home Circle," a department of the *Signs* magazine (1876f). From periodicals on health she gathered material for "Mrs. White's Department" in the *Health Reformer* from March 1871 to March 1874. Her carefulness in the use of resources was put into words in the 1890s. She was told: "Gather up the fragments; let nothing be lost." W. C. White explains:

About four years ago the word came to her, "Gather up the fragments, let nothing be lost," and this has been repeated many times since.[\[38\]](#) But not till Sister Peck came were we able to do more than keep copies of the newly written documents.

For some months Sister Peck has devoted a portion of her time to sorting, filing, reading, and indexing all of Mother's manuscripts within our reach, and Mother has been looking over her old diaries and manuscripts that were never copied on the typewriter. In these she finds many precious things that are being copied, filed, and indexed with the rest.[\[39\]](#)

Though the object of this command initially had to do with the preservation and organization of her own writings, it also had a bearing on the "thought gems" that she gathered from the writings of others.

... Gems of thought are to be gathered up and redeemed from their companionship with error; for by their misplacement in the association of error, the Author of truth has been dishonored. The precious gems of the righteousness of Christ, and truths of divine origin, are to be carefully searched out and placed in their proper setting, to shine with heavenly brilliancy amid the moral darkness of the world. *Let the bright jewels of truth which God gave to man, to adorn and exalt his name, be carefully rescued from the rubbish of error; where they have been claimed by those who have been transgressors of the law, and have served the purposes of the great deceiver on account of their connection with error.* Let the gems of divine light be reset in the framework of the gospel. Let nothing be lost of the precious light that comes from the throne of God. It has been misapplied, and cast aside as worthless; but it is heaven-sent, and each gem is to become the property of God's people and find its true position in the framework of truth. *Precious jewels of light are to be collected, and by the aid of the Holy Spirit they are to be fitted into the gospel system.* ... Jesus has said, "Gather up the fragments, . . . that nothing be lost."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, 10-23-1894, emphasis supplied. (See also *DA* 287–288.)

This does not mean that her books consist of paragraph after paragraph of selections from other authors. The 61 percent of "registered independence" and the original thought employed in the paraphrased and "modified verbatim" sentences in the chapters of the Life of Christ Research Project alone mitigate against such a conclusion. Ellen White did grow in her understanding of truth, yet her new insights were consistent with and extensions of the revelations she had previously received from God.[\[40\]](#)

## Color-coded discoveries

In addition to rating sentences, the original study also underlined dependent sentences and boldfaced significant words, whether they were verbatim or paraphrased. It was only when we added color-coding in studying chapters of *The Desire of Ages* outside the original study (green for Scripture usage, red for verbatim words, and blue for paraphrased words) that we were able to "see" certain things about Ellen White's literary dependency:

- .. The prominence of green tells us that she used a lot of Scripture, which may or may not have been suggested by the works of others. Scripture is "community property," and Ellen White's acquaintance with Scripture certainly explains many of the apparent literary parallels in her telling of the Gospel story.
- .. The presence of blue tells us that she has paralleled the narrative of another work on the life of Christ. In some cases, parallels to the sources have seemed to follow them quite closely. In other cases, Ellen White's "loose paraphrase," which includes additional insights or a different point of view from the supposed source, leaves us wondering if she wasn't rather covering the same "literary ground" without dependence on the supposed source. Should we not expect her to describe the same set of events with similar words as other writers from time to time?[\[41\]](#)
- .. The smattering of red tells us, in a few rare instances, that she has gathered a *nearly exact quotation* from a particular source.

Here are a few quotations that were gathered and incorporated into *The Desire of Ages*.

► "Nearly two thousand years ago, a voice of mysterious import was heard in heaven, from the throne of God, 'Lo, I come.' Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldst not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me. ... Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God.' Heb. 10:5-7." *DA* 23.1.

*Source:* "Nearly two thousand years ago, a voice of strange and mysterious import was heard in heaven; and the more mysterious, because it issued from the throne itself. Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me. Lo I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my breast." Heman Humphrey, D.D., in *The Great Teacher* by John Harris, xiii.

*Comment:* As similar as this is, even here there is some originality. Though Ellen White uses the same unique Scripture as Heman Humphrey in *The Great Teacher*, xiii, she does not follow his looser citation of the text.

► "So Christ set up His tabernacle in the midst of our human encampment. He pitched His tent by the side of the tents of men, that He might dwell among us, and make us familiar with His divine character and life." *DA* 23.3f.

*Source:* "... having been made flesh, he came and set up his tabernacle in the midst of the human encampment, pitched his tent side by side with our tents, to attest the presence of God, to make us familiar with his character and sensible of his love." John Harris, *The Great Teacher*, 137.

*Comment:* Ellen White gathered this beautiful word picture of the Incarnation from a partial sentence, using 22 out of 62 words. It is based on John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt [lit. "set up his tabernacle or tent"] among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

► "As the high priest laid aside his gorgeous pontifical robes, and officiated in the white linen dress of the common priest, so Christ took the form of a servant, and offered sacrifice, Himself the priest, Himself the victim." *DA* 25.1.

*Source:* "As the high-priest laid aside his gorgeous pontifical robes, and officiated in the white linen dress of a common priest, so Christ emptied himself, and took the form of a servant, and offered sacrifice, himself the priest, himself the victim." Charles Beecher, *Redeemer and Redeemed, An Investigation of the Atonement and of Eternal Judgment* (1864), 65.

*Comment:* Ellen White takes nothing else from Beecher's chapter on Azazel. This thought gem first appeared in MS 57, 1896 (18MR 362.2), used in *RH* 9-7-1897, par. 12. In MS 101, 1897 (12MR 398.1), written for *The Desire of Ages*, she described the same concept in the words: "Priest and victim combined, He entered the Temple as a place of sacrifice. Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the

world. He is a true high priest, for after enduring humiliation, shame, and reproach, after being crucified and buried, He was raised from the grave, triumphing over death. He is a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." The borrowed sentence from Beecher says it best. Marian Davis chose the wording of MS 57 over MS 101.

► "Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share." DA 25.2.

Source: "He was treated as we deserved, in order that we might be treated as he deserved. He came to earth and took our sins, that we might take his righteousness and go to heaven. He was condemned for our sins, in which he had no share, that we might be justified by his righteousness, in which we had no share." Robert Boyd, *The World's Hope; or The Rock of Ages* (1873), 381–382.

Comment: In all their comparison of *The Desire of Ages* with the "sources," Marcella Anderson King told me that none of the readers in the study ever encountered as much verbatim borrowing as in this last example. It is the absolute maximum in verbatim borrowing! (Moreover, the concentration of source allusions—both verbatim and paraphrased—in *The Desire of Ages* is not typical of Ellen White's writings in general.[42])

.. In other instances, the red tells us she borrowed *well-worded phrasing*:

► "And all that He endured—the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face—speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise. He who stilled the angry waves and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee, who opened blind eyes and called forth the dead to life,—offers Himself upon the cross as a sacrifice, and this from love to thee." DA 755.1.

Source: "But the love of Jesus is infinitely more generous, patient and self-denying than a mother's love. He has been more deeply afflicted by our ingratitude and disobedience than any mother ever was by the misconduct of her child. He has longed and labored for our eternal salvation more earnestly than any human parent ever did for the welfare of an only son.

"As we stand and gaze by faith upon the cross of Jesus, every expression of his agonized countenance, every drop of blood flowing from his many wounds, every convulsion with which the torture of crucifixion shakes his frame, every groan which the hiding of his Father's face extorts from his troubled soul, seems to say to us, 'It is for thee that these pangs are borne. It is that thou mayest be forgiven that I consent to have all shames and crimes imputed to me. It is to blot out the record of thy dark and dreadful iniquity that my blood is shed. The grave shall close over me with its horror of great darkness that I may spoil the dominions of death and unbar the gates of life for thee. I submit to all this shame and agony because I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and I could not rest till I had brought back thy wayward and wandering soul to God." Daniel March, *Walks and Homes*, 316–317.

*Comment:* This description came to *The Desire of Ages* via *Spirit of Prophecy*, 3:162. While March is less tedious and more eloquent than other sources, with the editorial assistance of Marian Davis, Ellen White captures the best of his expressions.

► "The spotless son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe." *DA* 755.1.

*Source:* "Take one view of thy dying Saviour breathing out his spirit upon the cross! Behold his unspotted flesh lacerated with stripes, by which thou art healed! See his hands extended and nailed to the cross,—those beneficent hands which were incessantly stretched out to unloose thy heavy burdens and to impart blessings of every kind! Behold his feet riveted to the accursed tree and nails,—those feet which always went about doing good and traveled far and near to spread the glad tidings of everlasting salvation! View his tender temples encircled with a wreath of thorns, which shoot their keen afflicting points into his blessed head,—that head which was ever meditating [*sic*] peace to poor, lost, and undone sinners and spent many a wakeful night in ardent prayer for their happiness!" Fleetwood, *Life of Christ*, 362.

*Comment:* Ellen White condenses Fleetwood's phrasing for a tighter and more potent contrast of Jesus' tender ministry with the horror of His crucifixion.

► "Looking upon the smitten Lamb of God, the Jews had cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children." That awful cry ascended to the throne of God. That sentence, pronounced upon themselves, was written in heaven. That prayer was heard. The blood of the Son of God was upon their children and their children's children, a perpetual curse.

"Terribly was it realized in the destruction of Jerusalem. Terribly has it been manifested in the condition of the Jewish nation for eighteen hundred years,—a branch severed from the vine, a dead, fruitless branch, to be gathered up and burned. From land to land throughout the world, from century to century, dead, dead in trespasses and sins!

"Terribly will that prayer be fulfilled in the great judgment day. When Christ shall come to the earth again, not as a prisoner surrounded by a rabble will men see Him." *DA* 739.3.

*Source:* "'His Blood be upon us,' and—God help us!—'on our children!' Some thirty years later, and on that very spot, was judgment pronounced against some of the best in Jerusalem; ... A few years more, and hundreds of crosses bore Jewish mangled bodies within sight of Jerusalem. And still have these wanderers seemed to bear, from century to century, and from land to land, that burden of blood; and still does it seem to weigh 'on us and our children.'"

"With this cry Judaism was, in the person of its representatives guilty of denial of God, of blasphemy, of apostasy. It committed suicide; and, ever since, has its dead body been carried in show from land to land, and from century,



to century; to be dead, and to remain dead, till He come a second time, Who is the Resurrection and the Life!" Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2:578, 581.

*Comment:* Ellen White uses key phrasing from Edersheim, but she anchors her point in the imagery of John 15. She also avoids the more gruesome aspects of Edersheim's imagery.

► "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross." *DA* 83.4.

*Source:* "Nevertheless it will do us all good, frequently and solemnly to review the closing scenes in the Saviour's earthly life. Amid all the material and worldly passions, by which we are beset and tempted, we shall learn many salutary lessons, by going back in memory, and spending a thoughtful hour, in the endeavor to strengthen our faith and quicken our love at the foot of the cross. What then are the lessons which the divine Passion, the infinite sacrifice, the true and redemptive Cross of Christ is fitted to teach?"

"First of all we may learn that lesson which is the beginning of life and peace to weary souls, the lesson of penitence at the foot of the cross." Daniel March, *Walks and Homes*, 313–314.

*Comment:* March's statement made its way into *The Desire of Ages* via *Testimonies*, 4:374. But, my, what Ellen White does with March's words! It is simple elegance! In this connection, the words of James Russell Lowell most aptly apply:

"A thing always becomes his at last who says it best, and thus makes it his own."

.. In most instances, however, the red verbatim words are not from a single identifiable quotation, but are merely *some of the same isolated words used by another writer* that Ellen White used to make her point.

It seems quite unlikely that she consciously and overtly *copied* each scattered red verbatim word, sitting down with several books to pick out verbatim words here and there for her writing. Mrs. White was a prolific writer. She turned out numerous letters and pages of manuscript day after day. Compiling her writings from multiple sources all at once would have made the process of writing painfully slow.

There is only the slightest hint in Mrs. White's manuscripts for *The Desire of Ages* of the 1890s that she ever had a book before her as she wrote.<sup>[43]</sup> Her words are generally free flowing and unconstrained by anything but the mental "videotape" of the scene before her. I'll never forget the impression I received as I read Ellen White's MS-129-97 (used in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 728–734) for the first time. In reviewing her account of the condemnation of Christ before Herod, I couldn't help but think that she was simply recounting what she had seen firsthand in vision.

Dr. Veltman's intention in taking on this study was to try to identify the works that had a literary influence on the final form of *The Desire of Ages*. His persistent efforts, together with those of his assistants and volunteer readers, have contributed significantly to our knowledge of the technical side of the wording of the book. Yet, such knowledge does not address Ellen White's conceptual originality, which was built on the foundation of Ellen White's earlier writings. Neither does it address her continued use of some of the same parallel phrasing in later unrelated periodical articles and unscripted sermons. The fact that many of the key words and phrases she uses in *The Desire of Ages* appeared later in her transcribed sermons (which were generally delivered without notes) and in her writings on unrelated subjects suggests that, rather than picking out words here and there from the works of others to improve her writing, the scattered verbatim words which do not correspond to the major source work(s) for the chapter were actually *vocabulary* and colorful expressions she *assimilated* from her reading.[44] Based on the scattered and limited nature of significant verbatim parallels between *The Desire of Ages* and William Hanna's *Life of Christ*, Walter F. Specht wrote:

"It appears doubtful that Ellen White had Hanna's *Life of Christ* before her as she wrote. In her search for adequate words to portray what she had in mind, however, she may have recalled some of the exact words and phrases Hanna had used in the work she had carefully read." [45]

It is true that she did have a "remarkable memory of details," as a reporter mentioned in his newspaper report after he had listened to Ellen White tell about her visit to Europe. [46]

Even when it is fairly obvious that Ellen White has adopted wording from another author, the point that she makes with the language she borrowed is often different from the one made by the source. In comparing the wording of *The Desire of Ages* with *Life of Christ*, Marcella Anderson noted that Ellen White used Hanna's words in an adapted sense, that she did not follow Hanna's use of Scripture, and that she gave many details of the story not discussed by Hanna or by other sources. (And her thoughts didn't always follow the order of his thoughts—even in the manuscripts.) In other words, she used Hanna's words to form her own thoughts. Specht came to the same conclusion. [47] In recent research, we have discovered that some of the instances of parallel *words* or *concepts* in the sources have been predated by the same words or concepts in *Spiritual Gifts* or periodical articles. This discovery demonstrates that Ellen White already had an overview of the life of Christ—as well as a great many of its details—before reading other works to help improve her writing. In a letter early in 1889, she mentions that "the betrayal, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus" had passed before her point by point. [48] Her account of the crucifixion in *Spiritual Gifts* demonstrates her uncanny awareness of the spiritual struggle unfolding behind the scenes. It is clearly an eyewitness account. After her heart-rending description of Jesus' crucifixion, Ellen White writes: "*I beheld the angelic host watching with untold interest the resting place of Jesus.*" 1SG 64.1.

## Why Ellen White doesn't identify her sources

Though Ellen White sometimes refers to books she has read, [49] she doesn't usually tell us which ones were her sources; and she doesn't footnote *The Desire of Ages* like some of the more scholarly volumes on the life of Christ. [50] Why not? Was it not that in calling attention to sources she felt that it would divert attention from the self-validating nature of the gems of thought themselves, which, in the words of her husband James, "are so clear and beautiful that the unprejudiced mind grasps them at once as truth"? [51] Was it not that, like Frank Gunsaulus, she thought that attaching sources to her writing would be construed as a display of learning? [52] or that, like William Hanna and John Wesley, she thought footnotes would burden the book's pages [53] and "divert the mind of the reader from keeping close to the point in view, and receiving what was spoken only according to its own intrinsic value"? [54] Was it not that in calling attention to the human side of her writing she would risk emptying

"the messages of their power"[55] and leave some to say, "This is not God's message to me"?[56] Certainly Mrs. White did not want anything to get in the way of the reader "hearing" what the book has to say.[57] As Dr. Veltman described *The Desire of Ages*:

The reader is not left to imagine anything except what it would have been like to have been in Palestine in the time of Jesus and to have faced the realities she is describing. The reader of the *DA* is hardly ever conscious of the text itself or impressed with the literary skill of the author. One is caught up with the narrative and its meaning and appeal.[58]

*The Desire of Ages* wasn't written in a technical style to "satisfy ... the questionings of the critics." It was written to "present the love of God as revealed in His Son, the divine beauty of the life of Christ." [59] Complaints about her failure to acknowledge sources are based on anachronistic application of more stringent recent standards. "Oh," people say, "but Ellen White was a prophet. She should have known that standards would change." But is that realistic? (If this is true, the prophets of old should have also anticipated our modern requirements!) If one will stop and think about it, Ellen White's knowledge of proper literary practice didn't come from a literary education, but from the conventions she observed in the works of her contemporaries. If the sermonic style of William Hanna, Daniel March, and Henry Melvill—with virtually no attribution in their books—were our pattern for writing rather than the more academic style of Samuel J. Andrews and Alfred Edersheim, what conclusion would we have drawn about the necessity of giving credit for our literary sources?

We don't need to know where every nuance of expression in *The Desire of Ages* comes from in order to enjoy the spiritual message of the book. (In fact, such academic superfluity actually gets in the way.) In quietly identifying, improving, and incorporating into *The Desire of Ages* some of the most effective language for communicating the story of Christ's redeeming love, Ellen White, the author, and Marian Davis, the compiler and editor, did readers a great service.

When you hear a Beethoven symphony you feel you could not change a note; an editor feels he could not improve on *The Desire of Ages* by changing a word. No other life of Christ, aside from the Gospels themselves, so profoundly moves the human heart.[60]

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[1] John Dart, "Plagiarism Found in Prophet Books," *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1980, describing the discoveries and accusations of Dr. Walter Rea.

[2] The charge against Dana was the only one of these that resulted in a successful legal suit.

[3] Theodore Pappas, *Plagiarism and the Culture War; The Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Other Prominent Americans*. (Hallberg Pub., 1998), 28-29. Others accused of plagiarism were Harriet Beecher Stowe, James Russell Lowell, Jack London, Mrs. E.D.E.N. Southworth, Nathaniel Parker Willis, Fanny Fern, Rose Terry Cooke, and Martin Luther King.

[4] I am indebted to E. Marcella Anderson King for most of the details regarding the development of the process of study. Mrs. King's description is included as an appendix to the soon-to-be published book on inspiration and Ellen White's use of sources in *The Desire of Ages*, which the author of this article co-wrote with Mrs. King, who worked side by side with Dr. Fred Veltman, Ph.D., as a reader and senior research assistant during the eight years of intensive study of the Life of Christ Research Project. She has a Master of Arts in Mathematics, is a student and teacher of the Bible and the writings of Mrs. Ellen G. White, and was the chief contributor to the Ellen White Sabbath School lesson comments for over a decade.

The explanation of the reason for the weighted random selection of the chapters came from a conversation with Dr. Veltman before he died early this year while I was completing the manuscript for the book on *The Desire of Ages*.

[5] Warren H. Johns, Tim Poirier, and Ron Graybill, compilers, *A Bibliography of Ellen G. White's Private and Office Libraries*, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD, 3<sup>rd</sup> revised edition, April 1993.

[6] Because he presupposed greater dependency on the part of Ellen White, Dr. Veltman suggested that the "sources" they located would likely be followed by more. It is the opinion of this author that, due to his method of evaluating what was found, the project put its fingers on nearly all possible literary dependency.

[7] Fred Veltman, "Full Report of the Life of Christ Research Project" (Angwin, Calif., Nov. 1988), p. 941, emphasis supplied.

[8] Veltman, p. 883.

[9] With that many pages, perhaps the reader can now understand why this paper is called a "quick view"!

[10] For example, a sentence in Ellen White's *Redemption Leaflets*, vol. 1 (1RL76/57), p. 57, is rated as a "modified verbatim" (V2) when compared to March's *Walks and Homes of Jesus* (M/104c/61), while the corresponding sentence in *DA* is considered a strict paraphrase (P1).

DA72/240 All seemed eager for his destruction. [M/104c/61] (P1)

1RL76/57 All seemed eager to act a part in destroying him. [M/104c/61] (V2)

104c/61 every one eager to bear a part in destroying him...; [March, WHJ]

[11] W. C. White, letter to L. E. Froom, Jan. 8, 1928 in *Selected Messages*, book 3, pp. 459, 460, emphasis supplied.

[12] *In Context*: Christ Himself did not suppress one word of truth, but He spoke it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact, and thoughtful, kind attention in His intercourse with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, «never gave needless pain to a sensitive» soul. He did not censure human weakness. ... Every soul was precious in His eyes.—*DA* 353.1.

A true appreciation of the story of the teachings of the gospel will reveal the fact that our Lord himself exercised the most beautiful and thoughtful tact in all his mingling among the people. He was utterly incapable of rudeness. He never needlessly spoke a harsh word. He never gave needless pain to a sensitive heart. He was most considerate of human weakness. He was most gentle toward all human sorrow. He never suppressed the truth, but he uttered it always in love. ... Every scrap of humanity was sacred and precious in his eyes. He bore himself always in the attitude of tenderest regard for every one."

—James R. Miller, *Week-Day Religion*, p. 187.

[13] One of the firm conclusions of the Veltman report was that it was Ellen White, and not her secretaries or Marian Davis, who was responsible for any borrowing of wording.

[14] [http://dedication.www3.50megs.com/David/DA\\_58\\_analyzed.html](http://dedication.www3.50megs.com/David/DA_58_analyzed.html)

[15] Raymond F. Cottrell, "The Literary Relationship between *Desire of Ages*, by Ellen G. White and the *Life of Christ*, by William Hanna," (Nov. 1, 1979), 6. Though still having limits of how much of their work they were willing to share, nineteenth-century writers were much freer about using and sharing published works. We find Ingram Cobbin, for example, writing: "Henry has made very free with Bishop Hall and others; Scott and Benson have enriched their pages abundantly from Henry; Gill has translated the spirit of Poole's 'Synopsis,' but he most generally gives his authorities; Adam Clarke and Davidson have been much indebted to all the best critics, though the former does not always mention his obligations, and the latter never." *The Condensed Commentary and Family Exposition of the Holy Bible* (London: William Tegg, 1863), Preface, p. iv.

[16] David Carpenter, "Hoovering to Byzantium," found online at <http://www.dccarpenter.com/hoovering.htm>.

[17] Ellen Weinauer, "Plagiarism and the Proprietary Self: Policing the Boundaries of Authorship in Herman Melville's 'Hawthorne and His Mosses'," *American Literature* 69/4 (1997): 700, 712.

[18] The word, "vacillating," is frequently used to describe Pilate. See William Hanna, *The Life of Christ* (New York: American Tract Society, 1863), p. 676; Robert Boyd, *The World's Hope; or, the Rock of Ages* (Chicago: H. S. Goodspeed & Co., 1873), p. 380; Charles F. Deems, *Who Was Jesus?* (New York: J. Howard Brown, 1880), p. 659; and J. H. Ingraham, *The Prince of the House of David; or, Three Years in the Holy City* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1888; c. 1859), p. 397.

[19] Samuel J. Andrews, *The Life of our Lord upon the Earth* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), p. 533; Hanna, p. 671; John Kitto, *Daily Bible Illustrations* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1881), p. 413; and Augustus Neander, *The Life of Jesus Christ in its Historical Connexion and Historical Development* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1848), p. 415.

[20] Based on Matt. 27:12 and used by Henri Didon, *Jesus Christ*, 2 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, & Co., Ltd., 1893), pp. 338 and 327; Boyd, p. 382; Deems, pp. 650, 651; Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2 vols. (New York: E. R. Herrick & Co., 1886), vol. 2, p. 563; as well as Ellen White in a sermon at Battle Creek, July 16, 1881 (RH 01-04-1887).

[21] Hanna, pp. 674, 688, 689; Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (New York: Hurst & Co., 1874), p. 628; Edersheim, p. 572; Kitto, p. 413; Neander, pp. 413, 415, 416; James Stalker, *The Life of Jesus Christ*, new, revised edition (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1880), p. 139; Didon, p. 339; and Deems, p. 651, all use the word "curiosity" to describe Herod. In describing Pilate, see Farrar, p. 628; Kitto, p. 413; Neander, p. 415. Note that Ellen White used the phrase, "gratify his curiosity," in 1SG 55:1.

[22] See Farrar, p. 629; George Jones, *Life-Scenes from the Four Gospels*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: J. C. Garrigues & Co., 1868), p. 376; Edersheim, pp. 569, 577; Ingraham, p. 399; and Neander, p. 416.

[23] See Farrar, pp. 630, 646, Charles C. Adams, *Life of our Lord Jesus* (New York: No. 11 Bible House. Charles F. Roper, 1878), p. 330, Didon, p. 350; Neander, p. 417; and Edmond Dehault de Pressensé, *Jesus Christ, His Times, Life and Work* (1866), p. 515.

[24] See Johann P. Lange, *The Life of the Lord Jesus Christ: A Complete Critical Examination of the Origin, Contents, and Connection of the Gospels*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1872), p. 283; Deems, p. 664; Edersheim, p. 599; and Stalker, p. 144.

[25] The double designation is used by several source works, namely, Andrews, p. 541; Jones, p. 381; Kitto, p. 414; Heinrich Ewald, *The Life of Jesus Christ* p. 321; Thomas Robinson, *Scripture Characters: or, a Practical Improvement of the Principal Histories in the Old and New Testaments*, 2 vols. (1849), p. 439; George F. Pentecost, *Bible Studies from the NT*, p. 347; William S. Plumer, *The Rock of our Salvation ...*, p. 185; but Ellen White used in 3SP 141:2.

[26] See Cunningham Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ* (1880), p. 779; John S. C. Abbott, *The History of Christianity* (1872), p. 131; Andrews, p. 553; Joseph Angus, *Christ Our Life: in its Origin, Law and End* (1853), p. 259; Edersheim, pp. 583, 584, 585, 587; Farrar, p. 646; John Fleetwood, *The Life of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (1860), p. 361; Hanna, p. 701; Ingraham, p. 402; Jones, p. 386; Kitto, p. 420; Lange, pp. 284, 290, 299, 323; Neander, pp. 417, 418; and Stalker, pp. 141, 142.

[27] See Farrar, p. 648; Fleetwood, pp. 354f, 361; Jones, p. 387; Lange, p. 290; Neander, p. 418; Didon, p. 350; Edersheim, p. 593; and Geikie, p. 780.

[28] See Andrews, p. 545; Didon, p. 352; Farrar, p. 646; Lange, p. 296; Daniel March, *Walks and Homes of Jesus* (1866), p. 314; etc; and assimilated by Ellen White, as seen in the addresses given by Mrs. E. G. White General Conference session in Battle Creek, Nov. 19, 1883 (RH 07-01-1884), and at the Armadale Camp Meeting, Nov. 1895 (MS 21, 1895).

[29] Jones, p. 377; Hanna, p. 693; Fleetwood, p. 351; Bernhard Weiss, *The Life of Christ*, p. 356; Andrews, p. 537; John Flavel, *The Whole Works of*, vol. 1, pp. 109 and 116; Ingraham, p. 373; R. W. Clark, p. 277; Jones, p. 377; Kitto, p. 418; and Octavius Winslow, *The Glory of the Redeemer in His Person and Work* (1855), p. 9.

[30] Veltman, *Ministry*, Dec. 1990, p. 14.

[31] E. G. White, Letter 133, 1902 in *Selected Messages*, Book 3, p. 90.

[32] MS 3–1873. The word "scholar" had a different sense in the 1870s than it does today. It meant one who applied himself/herself to study—i.e., a *student*. Ellen White uses it to describe someone who makes a study of the art of healthful cooking (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 537, par. 2).

[33] MS 3–1873. (Would this not have been the time she began reading in earnest to improve her writing?)

[34] Of the two-hour March 14, 1858 vision, including the life of Christ, she wrote: "Most of the matter of the Great Controversy which I had seen ten years before, was repeated, and I was shown that I must write it out" (2SG 270). Even as late as 1892 she would write: "How inefficient, how incapable I am of expressing the things which burn in my soul in reference to the mission of Christ!"

[35] W. C. White letter to L. E. Froom, Jan. 8, 1928, in *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 460. W. C. White's explanation may lead us to conclude that she borrowed a great deal more than she really did. Aside from *The Great Controversy*, which attributes its sources through its Introduction and footnotes, the only "presenting" of things she learned through revelation that he could be thinking about would be *Sketches from the Life of Paul*, which has a total literary dependency of 12.23%.

[36] Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, p. 456. (See Veltman "Life of Christ" report, pp. 904, 944.)

[37] Ellen G. White, Letter W-25-1877, Oct. 16, 1877, from Oakland, California. The scrapbooks apparently had more to do with finding articles suitable for *Signs* than for the writing of books. "While we are seeking to get off my books, Sister Ings is devoting every evening to my scrapbooks. I have one about completed and several smaller-sized ones half done. We are getting together all the best pieces from exchanges for you to use--mothers' pieces for books, children's pieces for small books, youths' pieces for Sabbath reading. We are working to help you [Mary, in editing the *Signs*] in your work in every way we can.--Letter 46, 1876 (3BIO 53.6). (Note on meaning of "exchanges": publishers of periodicals of the day frequently "exchanged" editions of their periodicals with other publishers of periodicals at no cost.)

"Mrs. White has ever been a great reader, and in our extensive travels she has gathered juvenile books and papers in great quantities, from which she selected moral and religious lessons to read to her own dear children. This work commenced about thirty years since. (3BIO 54.3).

"She, in turn, watching for helpful materials, especially to read to her family, clipped out choice articles and pasted them in scrapbooks--large-sized volumes made up by binding the issues of some journals together for this specific purpose, or constructed from heavy new stock. These grew in number until there were some twelve or fifteen, which she referred to as her scrapbooks. They are now in the White Estate vault." 3BIO 52.4. The *Signs* of December 13, 1875 advertised a series of booklets compiled by Mrs. White: "We have for sale at this office a series of little books for children suited to the ages of from 5 to 12 years. Mrs. White has been gathering blessed little stories for the past twenty years, and pasting them in her scrapbooks. This little series of books is a careful selection from a great amount of excellent reading matter for children, and will be universally acknowledged by all who become acquainted with them to be the best in print." 3BIO 53.1. Several of the stories that she gathered were published in 1949 in a book entitled, *Scrapbook Stories: from Ellen G. White's Scrapbooks*.

The one book she was creating from the scrapbooks was not published under her name. It was to be called *Mother's Influence*. "Mary, I have a favor to ask of you. Will you get a small box and put in it small pink roots and slips, a few choice rose cuttings, fuchsia, and geraniums; and send also at the same time, if thought best, some one or two or more of my scrapbooks that contain pieces especially treating on the mother's duty and influence in her

family. I would like that little blue-covered book for youth and any other books that would help me in the work we design to get out, *Mother's Influence*. We want these things as soon as they can reach us." Letter 3b, 1881, p. 3. There is record of her clipping for scrapbooks until October of 1888 (3BIO 386.4). Four of the original 12–15 scrapbooks are at the White Estate.

[38] See 7T 206.4; 7T 239.4; SpTB19 31.2; TDG 363.2; 11MR 271.1; and 15MR 41.1.

[39] W. C. White, cited by Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Australian Years 1891-1900*, p. 451.3, 4.

[40] This is reflected in her readiness to accept the message of righteousness by faith presented by Elders Jones and Waggoner: "I have said to myself, It is because God has presented it to me in vision that I see it so clearly, and they cannot see it because they have never had it presented to them as I have. And when another presented it, every fiber of my heart said, Amen."—MS 5, p. 10. (Sermon, Rome, New York, June 19, 1889.)" *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 219.

[41] Ulrike Unruh found similarity between *The Desire of Ages* (1898), pp. 771–772, and Charles Edward Forlines' *Finding God Through Christ* (1947), p. 109: "To hasten the death of the malefactors, the soldiers broke their limbs. They did not break the limbs of Jesus, because he was already dead. They did, however, thrust a spear into his side. After this there could be no doubt about the reality of death. There came forth from his side both blood and water. This was a great revelation. Dead men do not bleed. Whence, then, this blood and water? Only a literally broken heart seems an adequate explanation. Jesus was dead, having died of a broken heart." The similarity in wording between the works is likely because of their both drawing from the common pool of biblical imagery. (Words similar to *DA* in red and blue.) <http://dedication.www3.50megs.com/compare75.html> What are the implications for parallels written before *DA*?

[42] Except for certain articles patterned after sermons of Henry Melvill, her works generally have a noted dependency rate of *less than one percent*. (See [www.whiteestate.org/issues/parallel.html](http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/parallel.html) for numbers of parallel lines and percentages of dependency for other of Ellen White's major works.) Warren Johns asserts in *MINISTRY* (June 1982), p. 7: "Approximately 40 percent of two articles each in the *Review and Herald* (July 18, 1882; July 5, 1887) can be identified as coming from two chapters in Melvill's Sermons." A more precise count puts it at 35% for "The First Prophecy" and 34% for "Christ Man's Example," if counting sentence units. (If counting words, the percentages of borrowing is much lower.) After the 31% estimate of total possible borrowing in *The Desire of Ages*, the 1911 *Great Controversy*, which acknowledges its sources, has the next highest percentage—20.16%.

[43] The parallels from Farrar found in *MS-51-97* (written for *Desire of Ages*, Chapter 75) are a bit more striking than the scattered verbatim words found in other manuscripts. However, these parallels represents only tiny bit of Farrar's chapter on this subject. The only significant colorful phrases from Farrar that ended up in *The Desire of Ages* are "through the hushed streets of the sleeping city" and "midnight seizure." Certain verbatim words from Harris did make their way into *MS-24-91*, but most of the sentences in which they are used have a different meaning. *MS-13-84* shows evidence of wording from Melvill's sermon, "Jacob's Vision and Vow." Diary (or Journal) entries are somewhat different since they can represent Mrs. White's copying or paraphrasing of "items from her extensive reading that she wanted to remember."

[44] A study of certain phrases she uses from the 1870s onward validates this point, since she expresses herself on completely different subjects in writings published after *DA*, using some of the very same expressions.

[45] Walter F. Specht, *The Literary Relationship Between The Desire of Ages, by Ellen G. White and The Life of Christ, by William Hanna*, part II (Loma Linda University, 1979), p. 19. Specht compared the last half of *The Desire of Ages* (chaps. 46-87) with *The Life of Christ* by William Hanna.

[46] "Mrs. Ellen G. White's Able Address. A Characteristic and Eloquent Discourse by This Remarkable Lady," *Battle Creek Daily Journal*, Oct. 5, 1887, quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years, 1876–1891*, p. 375.

[47] Specht, p. 37.

[48] Letter 14, 1889, cited by Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years, 1876–1891*, p. 31.

[49] In the 1888 *Great Controversy* and the 1911 edition of the same, she pointed out in the "Author's Preface" and "Introduction" that she used well-known Protestant sources to illustrate her points. Additionally, she also requested certain books, such as Melvill's *Sermons* and Daniel March's *Night Scenes*, and either recommended her sources (such as Wylie's history, Conybeare and Howson's life of Paul, and D'Aubigne's history of the Reformation, and Geikie's *The Life and Words of Christ*) or let it be known that she made use of her source in another of her works (Coles' *Philosophy of Health* is plainly referenced in the *How to Live* series, though not in her earliest noted gem in *2T* 63, which samples from Coles, pp. 64, 66, 67).

[50] Like Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*.

[51] James White, *Life Sketches of James and Ellen White*, p. 328.

[52] Frank W. Gunsaulus, *The Man of Galilee: A Biographical Study of The Life of Jesus Christ* (1899), preface: "A long list, indeed, would they furnish, if I were to supply the names of the authors and the books which I have freely drawn upon, and all other means employed by me, in writing this book. To make such an acknowledgment in the form of a catalogue, would expose me justly to the charge of pedantry ["an undue display of learning"]. . . . he who was seriously determined to make any account of Jesus Christ must have previously acquainted himself with the results of the exploration, exegetical inquiry, thinking and faith of many of the ablest men who have ever toiled with the greatest of subjects."

[53] A note in William Hanna's preface states something similar: "Nor has he thought it necessary to burden the following pages with references to all the authorities consulted. The English reader will find in the writings of Alford, Stier, or Ellicott, the warrant for most of those readings of the original and inspired records upon which the following narrative is based." *The Life of Christ*, preface, p. 7, note.

[54] John Wesley explained his own reason for not naming sources: "It was a doubt with me for some time, whether I should not subjoin to every note I received from them the name of the author from whom it was taken; especially considering I had transcribed some, and abridged many more, almost in the words of the author. But upon farther consideration, I resolved to name none, that nothing might divert the mind of the reader from keeping close to the point in view, and receiving what was spoken only according to its own intrinsic value." *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, Preface, pp. v and iv.

[55] Veltman, "Full Report of the Life of Christ Research Project," p. 172.

[56] Ron Graybill, *E. G. White's Literary Work: An Update*. An edited and annotated transcript of a tape recording of morning worship talks given at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Nov. 15–19, 1981, p. 23.

[57] Attorney Vincent L. Ramik makes the same point when he says: "I believe that the critics have missed the boat badly by focusing upon Mrs. White's *writings*, instead of focusing upon the *messages* in Mrs. White's writings." Ramik, *Adventist Review*, Sept. 17, 1981, p. 4.

[58] Veltman, pp. 929, 930.

[59] Publishers, *The Desire of Ages*, preface, pp. 13–14.

[60] Robert J. Wieland, *The Australasian Record*, May 31, 1982, p. 9.

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