

## "The Church 'drifting toward a crisis': Prescott's 1915 Letter to William White."

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### Abstract:

In 1915 Professor W. W. Prescott, wrote a letter of concern to W. C. White in which he made a number of controversial observations about uncorrected errors in authorized church publications and serious misconceptions about Ellen G. White's manner of writing which were held by many Adventists. Initial explanations and interpretations of the letter are inadequate. These explanations are reviewed and assessed. The historical context of the 1915 letter is further explored and misunderstandings about Prescott corrected. Other senior and trusted Adventist church leaders also experienced cognitive dissonance in their attempts to understand and explain "inspiration" as it applied to Ellen White's work. Elmshaven editorial assistants found it necessary to expand their understanding and their explanations. The foundational 1883 description of "inspiration" needed to be qualified. The work of the editorial circle around the prophet is significant. Should the theory of inspiration be adjusted so that the theory arises out of the actual data or should a presupposed theory be imposed on the data? Later explanations tended to over simply and idealize the literary process. Prescott's letter continues to have implications for the pastoral care and education of the church.

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### Introduction

On April 6, 1915 Professor W. W. Prescott, dean of Adventist church editors and resident theologian for the General Conference wrote a letter of concern to W. C. White in which he raised a highly sensitive issue and made a number of controversial observations. His burden concerned uncorrected errors in authorized church publications and distressing but serious misconceptions about Mrs. Ellen G. White's writings that were entertained widely among the membership of the Adventist community. Prescott, who had served the Church as College President, World Director of Education, Vice President of the General Conference and Editor of the Review, was a mature and respected church leader. But, he was worried because he perceived that the church was drifting toward a crisis. Prescott wrote confidentially. For pastoral reasons he did not feel free even to dictate the letter to his stenographer. His handwritten note at the end of the letter reports that he had chosen rather to type the letter himself.

Although the letter did not seem to have significant impact when it was first written, it caused consternation and anguish for many in the church when it was discovered and released sixty-five years later in 1980. The letter suggested that church leaders at the highest levels had long been aware of misconceptions amongst pastors and church members in understanding the role of Ellen White and

that little had been done to correct things. Three of Prescott's observations particularly troubled later readers of the letter:

1. It seems to me that a large responsibility rests upon those of us who know that there are serious errors in our authorized books and yet make no special effort to correct them.

2. It seems to me that we are betraying our trust and deceiving ministers and people. It appears to me that there is much more anxiety to prevent a possible shock to some trustful people than to correct error.

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3. The way your mother's writings have been handled and the false impression concerning them which is still fostered among the people have brought great personal perplexity and trial to me. It seems to me that what amounts to deception, though probably not intentional, has been practiced in making some of her books, and that no serious effort has been made to disabuse the minds of the people concerning her writings . . . I think however that we are drifting toward a crisis which will come sooner or later and perhaps sooner . . .<sup>1</sup>

On the face of it the letter clearly makes some damaging assertions. The confidential letter first came to light during research about problems in prophetic interpretation, a process that was to inform the Glacier View Sanctuary Review Committee.<sup>2</sup> The letter was soon circulating quite widely and from the perspective of White Estate Associate Secretary Arthur L White, was "being used entirely isolated from its setting." Apparently by some it was being interpreted as evidence of "a something-less-than-honorable-coverup" in the handling of the Ellen G White writings.<sup>3</sup> This paper will first discuss previous attempts to explain the 1915 letter and then seek to provide the historical context for understanding the assertions made in the letter. The paper will then consider the implications of the assertions in the quest to understand the concept of inspiration.

## I. Two Explanations

Robert Olson, Secretary of the White Estate trustees in 1980 provided one explanation of the letter in a careful four-page discussion in his booklet, *One Hundred and One Questions* about the work of Mrs. White, published in early 1981.<sup>4</sup> Olson understood that Prescott's basic concern was the misunderstanding amongst pastors and church members that led to the misuse of Mrs. White's writings in the realm of establishing historical facts or resolving arguments about disputed historical issues. He saw this as the thrust of the letter rather than it being concerned primarily with the

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problem of how to exactly define the nature of inspiration. Olson saw Prescott on one side of the argument with people like Stephen Haskell on the other and W. C. White in the middle in a moderating position.

At about the same time, Arthur L. White, Associate Secretary of the Estate, undertook the preparation of a thirty-one page statement reviewing the circumstances surrounding the writing of the troubling letter. White pointed out that "certain circumstances and situations must be understood," if the letter was to be evaluated correctly." This paper was made available as a White Estate shelf document in January, 1981. It provided a brief biographical survey of Prescott's background and experience followed by a lengthy discussion of various statements that Mrs. White had written about Prescott at various times which seemed to be intended to convey the idea that Prescott was a person of dubious credibility. Several pages were then given to a discussion of the suggestion that Prescott himself may have been the source of a misleading and "defective" concept of verbal inspiration which had become

widespread in the church and the last part of the paper took up an explanation of the difficulties under which W. C. White worked after the death of his mother and the various attempts that had been made to communicate to the church a correct understanding of the manner and methods adopted in the preparation of Mrs. White's books. There had been "no conscious cover-up" the paper argued, but the Ellen G. White staff had probably come short, but unwittingly" in the task of education and moving the church toward a "more factual concept of inspiration." The "concept of verbal inspiration" had been "so embedded in the minds and hearts" of church members, White contended, it had been difficult to dislodge.<sup>5</sup> A third unpublished "response" paper by the present author engaged with the explanations offered by Olsen and White and suggested corrections of some historical inaccuracies and suggested a broader interpretation of the Prescott letter.<sup>6</sup> This paper agreed with Robert Olson that the real issue Prescott was addressing in his 1915 letter was the nature of Mrs. White's authority and what

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Prescott considered to be a misunderstanding of the nature of and limits of her authority in the area of history. But the paper disagreed, however, with the argument that Olsen was making that W. C. White and W. W. Prescott differed from each other in the way they saw the issue of authority. It argued that Prescott was not asking W. C. White to yield up more of Mrs. White's authority than W. C. White thought proper. Although Prescott and White might differ over some minor doctrinal issues or points of prophetic interpretation they both agreed that Mrs. White's authority should not be used to settle historical or doctrinal matters. The response paper argued that the real difference being addressed in the problematic letter from Prescott to White was a difference over the need to be more frank with the church membership about the methods Mrs. White adopted in her work and how to accomplish this openness. Prescott felt that if the church could be better educated regarding the facts about how Mrs. White worked in the production of much of her bookwork, they would have a better, more factual understanding of her role and would thus avoid misusing her writings. The paper pointed out that Prescott was not alone in this disagreement with W. C. White but that W. A. Spicer, the General Conference Secretary shared the same view.<sup>7</sup> In private correspondence, Dr Olson further reiterated the argument that he thought Prescott did have a different view of the nature of authority basing the argument on the fact that Prescott had asked W. C. White and Ellen White to review a certain aspect of prophetic dating which the Elmshaven staff were unwilling to change. The example cited was the 1,260 day sequence of *Daniel 7 and Revelation 12* (538 AD to 1798 AD). Olson argued that the Elmshaven staff were unwilling to modify the date because they felt it was not negotiable and related to essentials of the faith.<sup>8</sup> It would seem, however, that Olson overlooked the significance of W. C. White's later defence of Prescott on this same issue of differing viewpoints on dates. Even though W. C. White might personally disagree with Professor Prescott on the detail of a prophetic interpretation, such differences on historical matters were not of the greatest importance" and did not constitute a denial of the

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faith. In a letter written in defence of Prescott to one of the professor's former students in 1931, for example, W. C. White made the point that liberty in such matters was important and that Mrs. White was not necessarily the last word on such matters. White commented,

I, too have been greatly blessed by Elder Prescott's teaching and ministry. I always love to hear him speak.

I am truly sorry that anyone should say that Elder Prescott teaches heresy. I think there are some things which he teaches regarding the prophetic dates that many of our other ministers and teachers do not accept. I and many others that I highly regard, question very seriously that part of his teaching which seems to unsettle a few of the historical dates that our ministers have used heretofore in their expositions of prophecy.

Elder Prescott is not the only one who is respected, loved and listened to, that teaches differently than his brethren in some matters of not the greatest importance. I do not think that we should accuse such men of teaching heresy.

Sister White highly regarded her ministering brethren and it was her wish that their influence should be carefully guarded by us all.<sup>2</sup>

The second explanation of Prescott's letter written by Arthur White in January, 1981 adopted an approach of discrediting W. W. Prescott, seemingly, in order to undercut and diminish the significance of the troubling statements his letter makes. In the light of extensive documentation and sources, newly available at the time, this approach seemed neither fair nor accurate scholarship. The paper's explanations and assertions did not seem to be well supported by the sources available. The response paper pointed out that the primary difficulty with

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White's paper was methodological. Only limited source material had been consulted. In attempting to understand Prescott's letter, it seems that only source material in the White Estate had been reviewed. Neither the wider correspondence between Prescott and his colleagues in the General Conference nor the correspondence circulating around and amongst the colleagues of both Prescott and Mrs. White seem to have been studied. The rich collection of sources in the General Conference Archives and in the White Estate letter files that provided essential resources for understanding the letter seem not to have been utilised. The A. L. White paper thus contained some major errors and a number of minor errors of fact and offered inadequate interpretations that were not supported by the wider range of sources available.

After consideration of the response paper a decision was taken to discontinue use of the January edition of the White Estate shelf document and to substantially revise it.<sup>10</sup> White acknowledged that the paper had been prepared in haste and that there had not been sufficient time to study the issue more widely. Some substantial changes were made, but the author felt unable to make further interpretive changes, because he felt that he had "a broader grasp of the overall situation." A new revised version of the paper was issued on June 15, 1981. This paper still serves as the standard shelf document made available to provide background on Prescott's 1915 letter.<sup>11</sup>

In mid-1982 the author's doctoral dissertation on the life and work of W. W. Prescott, which provided a substantial discussion of the context of the troubling 1915 letter and related matters, was completed. The material was later published by Andrews University Press in 1992 under the title *The Shaping of Adventism: The Case of William Warren Prescott*. In his review of the book in the *Adventist Review*, Editor William Johnsson listed the volume as the best from the press" for that year and recommended that the volume was essential reading for every church administrator.<sup>12</sup> The biographical study was further revised and expanded and published again in 2005 by *Review and Herald* under the title *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation*.<sup>13</sup> No further

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changes to the 1981 standard White Estate shelf document on the Prescott letter have been made in the light of this published research. The interpretations that attempt to explain the 1915 letter still vary substantially.

## II. Misunderstandings about Prescott

It may be helpful first, briefly to review what appear to be major misinterpretations of Prescott presented in Arthur White's 1981 paper. The first edition of the shelf document adopted a clear *ad hominem* argument apparently in order to denigrate Prescott's credibility. This same approach, though

milder, continues to be adopted in the revised paper. White cites a number of episodes from Prescott's experience, the general purpose of which seems to be to suggest that Prescott was an unsafe and unreliable leader in the discussion of theological issues and that the observations made in his 1915 letter may therefore not be as weighty as might appear on the surface. Unwittingly, in adopting this kind of ad hominem argument ("look at what mistakes Prescott made, his observations therefore are not valid") Arthur White was utilising the very same arguments that Prescott's reactionary, fundamentalist and anti- General Conference critics had used during the theological discussions and debates of the 1910s and 20s. These were, at base, the same kind of unfair personal arguments that were used by the same critics against Daniels when he was not re-elected to the General Conference Presidency in 1922. Informed leaders in the church such as A. G. Daniells, W. A. Spicer, I. H. Evans and also W. C. White had all protested vigorously against the use of this kind of argument as improper and unfair. The list of Prescott's "failings" had earlier been enumerated by Haskell and his supporters in an effort to discredit Prescott for his interpretation of the biblical term the daily" in Daniel 8.14. W. C. White had remonstrated with Haskell over using this kind of argument. As he explained to Prescott in 1915, "I have no sympathy with those harsh and misguided men who are plowing up and down on your back because you are not doing what they would like to see you do, or saying what they would

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like to hear you say. Not until the judgment will it be known how earnestly I have endeavoured to persuade these men to drop their burden."<sup>14</sup>

Daniells in a handwritten letter to W. C. White had also protested about the mudslinging. It bothered him that this was being done "in the name of your mother." It distressed Daniells that people such as S. N. Haskell, Leon Smith, F. C. Gilbert and others seemed to be committed to destroying "the good name" and the standing" of their opponents in a campaign of character assassination in order to discredit their opponent's viewpoints.<sup>15</sup> People like J. S. Washburn and Edson White had said the "most cruel things" and vindicated themselves by telling of alleged "private interviews with your mother." He thought Prescott had been handled terribly." He believed that if the mudslinging ever got to Prescott's ears it would "stagger him and his friends." "Our men should know," he contended, "that this is not argument and that men of thought and conviction will not be silenced in that way." This was the same spirit of Minneapolis in 1888 all over again he lamented.

The politics of personalities became a continuing issue. Daniells observed to W. C. White earlier over criticisms of his General Conference colleagues that he was aware of weaknesses and failings in his colleagues just as much as the critics were. On the other hand he was also aware of their strengths, and, in regard to Prescott, he had "seen in him some of the rarest gifts possessed by any man in our ranks." He was also aware, he noted on the other hand, that some respected church leaders thought that W. C. White had much more influence over Daniells as the President, than was good and helpful because these leaders worried more about W. C. White's "weaknesses" and "dangerous tendencies" than they did about his "strong, safe and valued gifts." Everyone had strengths and weaknesses, concluded Daniels, and it was a matter of affirming each other's strengths and helping each other's weaknesses. But looking for weaknesses in a person in order to discredit the person's point of view was not the way of moving discussions forward in the church.<sup>16</sup> It is surprising that Arthur White in order to diminish the

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points made by Prescott in his 1915 letter resorts to the arguments his father had protested against.

Whilst it is true that White could list a number of statements in which Mrs. White makes negative comments to Prescott as she gives counsel and guidance to him, there are dozens of other positive, laudatory comments that could just as easily be listed to counter-balance these. White does not cite these but such could include her encouragement of Prescott to accept a nomination to be President of



the General Conference (1897), her reliance on him as a reformer to correct the problems in the General Conference administration in the late 1890s, his powerful Christo-centric preaching, his biblical, theological and historical expertise so helpful with the editing of *Desire of Ages* and other of her books, his good counsel on education matters and his ability to "draw her out" in the giving of counsel just as her husband used to. "The truth" was in his heart," she wrote "as well as on his lips."<sup>17</sup> Both Mrs. White and W. C. White emphasized the professor's strong and unique gifts when they urged him so strenuously to agree to head up the new Review and Herald Publishing Company in 1905 and to give it a fresh new spiritual mould and ensure that it succeeded when it transferred as a reformed organization to Washington D. C.<sup>18</sup> Prescott was certainly not without his weaknesses.<sup>19</sup> But some things Arthur White's paper alleged against Prescott as part of the *ad hominem* argument were simply inaccurate. He suggested initially, for example, that Prescott was troubled as to whether Mrs. White was inspired or not. This was not true. Prescott ever affirmed his deep conviction of the inspiration of Mrs. White.<sup>20</sup> Another major theme in the first edition was that Prescott had espoused Ellet Waggoner's views on sanctification and pantheism during the time that the professor had served as the leader of the Church in Great Britain (1897 – 1901) but that Prescott made a sudden switch in his theological views in November 1902. This also was simply not true.

The 1981 response paper responded to this line of argument in White's paper by pointing out that the evidence clearly indicated that Prescott had never adopted pantheistic views although he was

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often later unfairly accused of it by his fundamentalist opponents and critics such as Judson S. Washburn and Claude. E. Holmes. While Prescott may have adopted language during the late 1890s to emphasise the indwelling of Christ in the Christian life that may have been "overdrawn," he dropped the use of such language as soon as he was aware that it was being misunderstood and misused.<sup>21</sup> A comparison of Prescott's sermons and writings with Dr J. H. Kellogg's book *Living Temple* evidences a wide and fundamental difference. The charges of pantheism made by A. T. Jones in 1904 at the height of the Kellogg crisis and which are found in the White Estate document file DF 198 which was the material Arthur White seems to have drawn on for his paper are clearly illfounded and erroneous as was even pointed out by others at the time. It was Prescott himself who in May 1902 detected problems with the theology of Kellogg's book. When Kellogg resisted the idea of making changes, Prescott was obliged to take the matter up in discussions in the *Review* of which he was editor. There was no abrupt switch in his theology.

In 1919 Prescott commented on the issue,

. . . it fell to my lot to stand in the forefront against that Pantheistic teaching. I was accused of having held exactly the same views as Dr. Kellogg had, and yet it fell to my light to fight him face to face in our committee and through the Review . . . I held exactly the same views as I hold now . . .  
. . . there is a deep feeling that has existed in the minds of many that I am just the same as Dr Kellogg and Wagner [sic] and that I brought it over from England and was really in the mess myself.<sup>22</sup>

Prescott strongly rejected this charge. After 1902 he avoided using language about the indwelling Christ that was obviously being misused by others but for the rest of his ministry he continued to emphasise the doctrine of sanctification as a personal experience of the indwelling Christ.

Arthur White's paper in this area highlights a methodological

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problem with regard to the simplistic use of sources. The paper cites a statement of Mrs. White from 1901 in support of Arthur White's argument concerning the professor's supposed "perils of imbibing some of the E. J. Waggoner's teaching."<sup>23</sup> Some of the overwrought language and expressions concerning sanctification that both Prescott and Waggoner were using at this time at the 1901 General Conference quite evidently did concern Ellen White. But it is important to note that she responded to this situation without making it obvious or raising any specific concern simply by taking opportunity in her own public addresses to speak in a way that balanced the picture and counteracted the more overwrought expressions. What these particular "overdrawn expressions" were that she had in mind she did not say when she recalled the events of the conference two-and-half years later in a discussion with General Conference President Arthur. G. Daniells, but they were expressions best "shunned." It is an important point to note, however, that she did not point this out personally to "sound a warning" to the two men or to others at that time in 1901. To the contrary, not long after the conference she strongly supported the invitation to Waggoner to become the leading Bible teacher at the new Emmanuel Missionary College and was greatly disappointed when the plan fell through. She had earlier tried to secure his services at Avondale to teach Bible.

Professor Prescott was actually unaware of Mrs. White's feelings at the time (1901) and was heavily involved in what was a stressful reorganization of the General Conference that with Mrs. White's support resulted in him being appointed to the highest levels of administration. On the matter of the sanctification statements, Mrs. White apparently felt that her own balancing comments in her public addresses were adequate. What she did write at the time, was a number of letters to Prescott encouraging him in his Gospel emphasis. It was just the preaching, she said, that the church needed. She encouraged him to balance his work of writing and administration so that he would also have time to continue visiting campmeetings to maintain this public ministry. But it is surprising that even this positive encouragement to use his

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preaching gifts in public ministry Arthur White in his revised paper is inclined to view negatively as a subtle "hint" that somehow Prescott needed to be involved in "positive, outgoing work." Mrs. White was not meaning at all that Prescott should give his "entire time" to public ministry. This is a misapplication of her comments.<sup>24</sup> In later years, Prescott's critics created the impression, or assumed that somehow Ellen White's comments were made known to Prescott and others as a warning. They used this later recollection of Mrs. White in her discussion with Daniells as ammunition in their ad hominem attack on Prescott. This is the sense in which Arthur White refers to the episode in both his first draft and also still in the revised version.<sup>25</sup>

Another of the unbalanced ad hominem attacks on Prescott in the 1920s was a repetition of the one that George B. Starr first made in 1910 which was then repeated by anti-General Conference critics like J. S. Washburn and Claude Holmes. This was that the professor did not rise to the challenge of city evangelism to which he was reassigned in 1910, the inference being that Prescott did not obey the counsel of Mrs. White. Arthur White recycles this simplistic and somewhat hostile line of argument in his 1980 paper and retains it in the revised version.<sup>26</sup>

There appears to be no understanding on the part of Arthur White about the personal impact on Prescott, of the death of the professor's wife, Sarah, from cancer at this critical juncture in his life or of his subsequent nervous breakdown from the ordeal of the bereavement compounded by years of overwork. Prescott's health did not fully recover for another two years. The ill-treatment he experienced at the hands of those who differed with him in the doctrinal discussion over the meaning of the term "the daily" in Daniel 8 complicated matters. Prescott reported to W. C. White that the reports of the alleged interviews of Edson White and F. C. Gilbert with Mrs. White greatly distressed his wife in the weeks just before she died because it was alleged that Ellen White had turned against them.<sup>27</sup> And then there were also the practical difficulties arising from the difficulty of finding replacement editorial staff for the *Protestant Magazine* Prescott had commenced only 12 months

earlier and which for financial reasons simply could not be deserted. While the re-arrangements in Prescott's work which Mrs. White had counselled in 1910 were designed to be a practical and effective way of taking the heat out of the theological ferment and furthering the best interests of both Prescott and the Church at the time, the re-arrangements had also to some degree been occasioned by personalised hostility toward Prescott from fundamentalist and reactionary elements in the church. Prescott was clearly badly hurt by the turn of events but his correspondence indicates that he was determined to do his best.<sup>28</sup> According to Daniells, the Professor took "the counsel Sister White has given him like a Christian and a whole-souled man, and has helped us in every way possible to make adjustments in the office."<sup>29</sup> In the eventual outworking of things, time and circumstances made it a difficult re-assignment to make work effectively. Daniells regretted that circumstances had conspired in such a way that Prescott had been unable to "throw himself entirely into the evangelistic work" but both A. G. Daniells and W. C. White understood the dilemma and the fact that the times and the changing circumstances meant a modification of the original plan.<sup>30</sup> A. L. White reflects none of this background but simply recounts the critic's interpretation of the episode to suggest spiritual weakness on the part of Prescott.

A further point that White made in his ad hominem argument was that for some reason after 1909, "the brilliance" of Prescott's star "began to wane" and that he was not again called to large responsibilities. This was an inaccurate statement and White corrected it in his revised paper although he continued to argue incorrectly that Prescott was "passed over when men were selected for elective leadership positions." Prescott continued to serve the General Conference as Religious Liberty Secretary for a time and then was elected the first Field Secretary in 1915 at the age of 60 specifically to assist and personally represent A. G. Daniells, the General Conference President, as he struggled to meet the increasingly heavy administrative duties associated with a rapidly growing church. This was a position Prescott continued to be elected to until his retirement in 1937. During this period he was

also called upon to serve as President for two colleges, as head of two theology departments and he authored several important books.<sup>31</sup>

In another strand to his ad hominem argument, Arthur White makes much of some statements that Mrs. White wrote to Prescott at the height of the discussion over the daily. Again, the letters seem to be mentioned by Arthur White with the underlying purpose of undercutting Prescott's credibility. The letters from Mrs. White were designed to counsel Prescott to avoid exacerbating the theological controversy over the daily in the light of the antagonism that the new view was generating from S. N. Haskell and his supporters like F. C. Gilbert and Leon Smith. Prescott responded positively to the counsel and immediately discontinued a series of articles that he had already commenced in the *Review* even though he understood from earlier personal counsel with W. C. White and his mother that there had been approval to proceed with the series. Arthur White does not refer to the reply to Mrs. White from Prescott which balances the picture and shows a ready response to comply with the counsel even though he, Daniells and W. C. White knew that Haskell was distorting facts, seriously misrepresenting the views of both Daniells and Prescott and prejudicing minds in a very unjustified campaign. W. C. White agreed with Daniells and Prescott and acknowledged that it was the old guard that had been "the unfair aggressors" in the conflict that developed.<sup>32</sup>

One of the letters that Arthur White quotes in his selection of negative comments about Prescott at this time was one of two that were not even sent to Prescott until two years after they were written. Even though others came to know of their contents, Prescott himself did not receive them until he had been away from the *Review* for more than a year. "It is a little difficult for me to understand why they were not sent to me at the time, if they were designed to be of any practical benefit, Prescott complained to



W. C. White."<sup>33</sup> The episode indicates the state of confusion that existed at Elmshaven and the considerable uncertainty of mind that Mrs. White experienced concerning developments during this period.<sup>34</sup> This background and context was not fully appreciated or

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understood by Arthur White.

In a similar vein, White attempts to show in his 1980 paper that Prescott and Daniells reacted differently to the counsels from Ellen White and suggests that while Daniells responded willingly to the counsel, Prescott was reluctant to move in the direction counselled. This interpretation of Prescott is very wide of the mark, and again reflects much more the highly prejudiced perspective of J. S. Washburn than it does of W. C. White or those other church leaders who worked closely with Prescott. It also indicates a lack of familiarity with the abundant documentation both about Daniells and about Prescott that is now available. It was the pattern of Prescott's life to faithfully respond to the testimonies sent to him even when they were uncomfortable and perplexing.<sup>35</sup> The example that Arthur White cites about Daniells in the attempt to show by contrast that Daniells responded more eagerly and completely to Mrs. White's counsel than Prescott is itself quite misleading and fails to deal adequately with the sources relating to the episode. The account of Daniells "offer" to lay aside his presidency is quite simplistic and inaccurate. The situation was that Daniells was confused over Mrs. White's strong comments about his lack of "conversion" and it was not until he had counseled with W. C. White and C. C. Crisler about what he should do in response that he began to understand. He followed their advice and conducted an evangelistic campaign in one of the large cities and after he had concluded the campaign he again followed their advice and arranged for other people from the area to write to Mrs. White to tell her what he had done.<sup>36</sup> Only then did her "burden" begin to lift. It is far too simplistic and unsustainable to argue that Daniells responded to Mrs. White's counsel better than Prescott did. W. C. White and A. G. Daniells struggled to find ways of appropriately responding to some of the situations arising from some of the frailties the aging Mrs. White experienced in her last years.<sup>37</sup> In both editions of his paper Arthur White discusses at some length the problem of revising both Mrs. White's books and other standard denominational books. He cites a number of quotations from Mrs. White which seem to indicate that Prescott and Daniells

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were part of the problem and that it would have been better for neither of them to have been involved. The argument that Arthur White makes from these quotations fails to take in the wider context and is a simplistic explanation that results in the portraying of an unfair negative picture of both Prescott and of Daniells. Mrs. White's nervousness about the whole issue of revisions was largely because of misrepresentations that had been presented by Haskell about the men in Washington. W. C. White in fact deliberately had to avoid informing Haskell about the revision project for *The Great Controversy* because he knew that he would make trouble and that he would not understand. He had reacted very negatively to a suggestion from Conradi via W. C. White that a sentence from *Christ's Object Lessons* be deleted because it was understood to conflict with a biblical statement in Revelation 5. Haskell was of the view that W. C. White should "never allow one sentence to be dropped out, or changed" in "writings that had gone before the public." He complained to W. C. White that it was this practice of dropping out of some of these things" that at the present time that had damaged W. C. White's reputation with the brethren. This editing process he reported "today is the cause of some of our best brethren losing confidence in you." They thought he was changing his mother's writings and then calling it "editing." Haskell would not go so far as to charge W. C. White with making "changes in the thought." He understood that the changes were only in "the wording and the reading of them." But even this limited scope of work he found unacceptable. But this was in fact too limited a view for the scope of work that needed to be undertaken.<sup>38</sup>

Mrs. White's ill-health during this period tended to complicate matters. According to W. C. White she suffered diminished abilities of concentration for a time and because of ill health and advancing age was easily confused. Haskell found it difficult to cope with this reality as well. "If I believed even what you have told me about having to tell your mother the same thing over three or four times in order that she might get a clear idea of things, so that she could give a correct testimony on some points, it would weaken my faith, mightily; not in your mother, but in what comes from her pen."<sup>39</sup>

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W. C. White was in a very difficult position too.

The records make it clear that with regard to the revising of *Great Controversy*, for example, that W. A. Spicer had been advocating corrections and revisions since 1908. W. C. White visited Washington to plead with Prescott to help them with the task. Prescott did not want to get involved. He was too busy and was aware of the difficulties involved. But after W. C. White's personal visit to Prescott to gently pressure him, he reluctantly agreed. To increase the pressure and ensure a response from Prescott, W. C. White later wrote to Daniells and urged him to encourage Prescott to help them with suggested factual corrections, by providing additional source material documents and by recommending other editorial suggestions. He asked Daniells to encourage Prescott to be as free as possible in his criticisms." W. C. White valued the long list of corrections from Prescott, assured the professor that he would protect his anonymity and in later years asked for more. This picture hardly fits the negative impressions about Prescott created in Arthur White's account of the revision process and the attitude of Elmshaven toward it. W. A. Spicer himself had also sent in suggestions at W. C. White's request as had E. R. Palmer, W. A. Colcord and others.<sup>40</sup> Spicer was convinced that more changes should have been made than had been made. And Spicer was not any less spiritual or any less to be trusted than Prescott. He was elected General Conference President in 1922. Yet in 1914 he had written,

There is one thing sure . . . it is firmly settled that phrases and historical statements in these [E. G. White] books have to be corrected just the same as in other books. Of course we are supposed to take full counsel with the author in making corrections. On the other hand, I believe the editors have been a little hard to deal with in accepting suggestions, though no doubt they have felt they have been very liberal . . . some things should surely have been corrected further.<sup>41</sup>

The process of book revision was clearly more complex than is

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often understood and W. C. White found himself working under considerable difficulty because of the atmosphere of suspicion generated in the conflict over the daily. A number of cross-currents were at play under the surface as W. C. White tried to complete the revision work on *The Great Controversy* and still maintain the appearance of a normal calm routine in the Elmshaven offices.<sup>42</sup> As Arthur White points out, Mrs. White acknowledged that in some of the important books that had been in print for years "there may be matters of minor importance that call for careful study and correction." But she was anxious that the usefulness of such books not be destroyed. Nor did she think that "providing weapons in the hands of those who have departed from the faith" was a good idea. There was a danger that "those who have newly embraced the message" would be confused. Thus she concluded, "The less that is done unnecessarily to change our publications, the better it will be." Mrs. White's pastoral concerns about the downside of the process made her anxious and worried.<sup>43</sup> There is clearly a tension here, and the hermeneutical principles of time and place must be used in understanding Mrs. White's cautions. Historical dates, and accuracy in the details of some historical narratives in denominational books could be considered to be minor matters. The advocacy of a semi-Arian view of the Godhead in books like Uriah Smith's *Daniel and Revelation* and the widely circulated *Bible Readings for the*

*Home Circle* was a much more serious and damaging issue for the denomination.<sup>44</sup> And how to achieve that revision and still achieve Mrs. White's pastoral objectives was a concern for Daniells, Prescott, Spicer and others.

### III. Assigning Blame

The April 6 letter from Prescott in 1915 clearly lays on the shoulders of W. C. White some of the responsibility for the misconceptions in the church about Mrs. White's books. This point of view was shared by W. A. Spicer, General Conference Secretary and later President. Spicer had also urged W. C. White to make some clearer explanatory statements" to the Church and suggested that the

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issuing of the revised edition of *The Great Controversy* would be a good occasion to correct many of the misconceptions. But he too was disappointed that W. C. White had not gone far enough. W. C. White recounted later that in 1913 at the General Conference session he had in fact made explanations intended to broaden the church's understanding of Ellen White's work but the delegates had misunderstood what he said and this had led him to become more cautious.<sup>45</sup>

Arthur White, in order to ease the blame for the misperceptions from W. C. White recounts some of the difficulties under which W. C. White worked. In his first draft, Arthur White expressed his understanding that neither W. C. White nor D. E. Robinson, his Elmshaven colleague, had, for example, been invited to attend the 1919 Bible Conference or the History and Bible Teachers conference that followed it. He later corrected this point. W. C. White had indeed been invited to attend and seriously considered making the journey across the continent to Washington. But the revised edition of White's paper explains at length the pressure of work on W. C. White and why he had chosen not to attend the conference and was thus unavailable to participate in the unscheduled discussions that were held on the Spirit of Prophecy. Arthur White felt that W. C. White could have contributed much to the discussions and corrected a number of things if he had been present.<sup>46</sup>

It is now widely recognised that the 1919 discussions represent a lost opportunity to help the church toward a more factual and realistic view of inspiration. But the task of correcting the misunderstanding was a task fraught with danger to whoever might attempt it. It was a task too difficult to achieve at that time. In order to further ease the blame for the misperceptions from W. C. White, Arthur White also recounts the perplexities his father faced in the years following his mother's death as the church grappled with how it would face functioning without a living prophet. "There was a history back of it" he noted. "Circumstances are to be blamed, not men."<sup>47</sup> This was true and the information that Arthur White provides about the struggles W. C. White and the Elmshaven staff experienced after the death of Mrs. White as

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they and the church sought for ways to adjust to the new circumstances is helpful.

For W. C. White on the personal level this was also difficult. Four years after his mother's death he confided in I. H. Evans about the difficult experience of adjusting. "Some times I mourn a little because I am now so much shut in, and so seldom meet with our leading brethren with whom I have been closely associated in former years." He saw the positive side of this, however, acknowledging that it was "a blessing although a trial." He was convinced that he would need to adjust to the new role of "being custodian" although he thought it would take him "a long time to get settled down to the work and to get an understanding of the material and how I am to relate myself to it." He spoke of "my isolation and my loneliness" and that like a "canary bird" he would need to learn to "whistle" to keep himself company. Extending the metaphor he asked Evans to pray for him that should he by chance find himself back in "any of the great nerve centers of the denomination" he might learn "when to sing

and when to keep silent." He felt hurt at times when he was "totally forgotten" and important meetings occurred without his knowledge but "I am getting used to it also" he reported. He understood also how the heavy debts on the estate slowed down his work but he looked forward to the day when they would be paid off.<sup>48</sup>

The question of just what the function of the Ellen G. White publications office should be was not altogether clear to the General Conference people although Arthur White suggests that it was clear to the people at Elmshaven. But as he reports, there was uncertainty among the trustees themselves about their role and their duties and there was uncertainty about who was to determine whether previously unpublished materials should be released or not. Coming to terms with the absence of the living Gift of Prophecy would require many years and the development of theological understandings and policy frameworks that would enable Mrs. White's writings to continue to be of value to the church. The story of this struggle is told more fully in my recent book on the history of the White Estate.<sup>49</sup>

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Arthur White commented in both his initial paper and in the revised paper that Prescott's "concern over the handling of the E. G. White writings, is almost too vague to be understood clearly" and admits he is not clear what Prescott is alluding to. It would seem, however, that W. C. White clearly understood the professor's concerns and also understood that wrong impressions about the way Mrs. White's writings had been written were widely held and that this led to wrong understandings among influential people about the way they could or should be used. W. C. White knew that some were using the writings in a way in which they should not be used; to settle disputed questions and to attack and besmirch the character of fellow workers. And W. C. White understood the difficulty of correcting the wrong impressions. He also understood how Prescott had been badly injured by those who held these wrong impressions. The sorry story of these years for Prescott and the hurt and damage that was also caused to the reputation of A. G. Daniells is told in much greater detail in my biographical study on Prescott.<sup>50</sup>

#### **IV. Prescott's Views on Inspiration**

One of the most uncomfortable and misleading themes of both Arthur White's initial paper and his revised paper is that Prescott's primary difficulty behind the troublesome 1915 letter "was an outgrowth of Prescott's own concept of inspiration." White initially argued that Prescott "was largely responsible for the perplexities of which he speaks, because of his own faulty concepts of inspiration" and because he had educated the church in these concepts.<sup>51</sup> He later deleted this explanation but continued in his revised paper to suggest that it was the professor's "defective" concept of inspiration that lay behind his observation that deception" had been practised at Elmshaven in the making of Mrs. White's books.

Arthur White concedes that Prescott's view of inspiration is actually difficult to clearly determine. And he acknowledges that the professor disavowed a "rigid verbal inspiration concept" of Mrs.

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White's writings but that "he did not disclose his position as a whole." What then can be known about Prescott's views of inspiration? Was it a "defective" view that led him to write his 1915 letter to W. C. White as is suggested by Arthur White? Arthur White cites a 1928 letter of W. C. White that claims that it was Prescott in the 1890s who complicated the problem for the church by teaching the concept of verbal inspiration outlined by German theologian Professor Louis Gausson in his book *Theopneustia* and that this was different from the regular long established view of the church.<sup>52</sup> While it is true that Gausson's book became the favoured text for many Bible teachers in Adventist colleges for the teaching of the doctrine of revelation and inspiration it is not true to say that the problem concept of "verbal inspiration" was a new thing introduced to the church by Prescott at this time. The

idea of the "plenary" inspiration of Scripture and the idea that infallibility" also somehow meant "inerrancy" was established with many in the church much earlier. Furthermore, the problem in the church was not simply a difference between "verbal inspiration" as argued by Gausson or "thought inspiration" as argued by others.<sup>53</sup> Whichever mechanism of inspiration might be advocated, the root problem for Adventists was whether the concept" or "thought" or "idea" expressed by the inspired prophet was "inerrant" or not. That is, could the meaning of an idea possibly be changed. Gausson resorted to the use of the concept of "verbal" inspiration and "dictation" and "inerrant autographs" as John Calvin had before him because it was the only way he could see of guaranteeing the immutability of the ideas expressed. There are several lines of evidence demonstrating that the idea that the autographs of Scripture were inerrant was a view held generally by Adventists long before Prescott developed any influence among them. The idea that the writings of Scripture and the writings of a prophet were inerrant was argued forcefully by both Moses Hull and Dudley M. Canright in their very widely circulated and promoted book, *The Bible from Heaven*. The book was a vigorous defence of an infallible Bible. It was heavily promoted through the *Review and Herald* and widely sold by

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colporteurs.<sup>54</sup> Beside this, excerpts from Gausson with his emphasis on plenary inspiration and the full infallible authority of scripture were occasionally quoted in the *Review* before Prescott found the German writer to be a useful resource in the 1890s. Furthermore, Stephen Haskell, in 1910 for example, argued that he had personally believed in "verbal inspiration" for fifty years. This reached back to the 1860s. But even though he accepted "verbal" inspiration he still allowed for verbal changes. This was 25 or 30 years before Prescott developed influence in church affairs.<sup>55</sup> Review editor F. M. Wilcox was also of the view that "verbal inspiration" was the "historical teaching of the denomination." He had always taken that position himself, he said. But then he went on to say, "Indeed, I hold to verbal inspiration of the Bible. I believe in thought inspiration as applied to both the Bible and the Testimonies." This overlapping of concepts highlights the fact that the problem was broader than just "verbal" inspiration.<sup>56</sup>

The underlying problem that all Adventist church leaders struggled with was the need to preserve the doctrinal position that the ideas or concepts of Scripture were infallible and immutable. Even the significant 1883 statement which sets out a more flexible understanding that church leaders were developing on thought inspiration, while allowing for corrections in grammar and words, nevertheless, it acknowledges that "*ideas*" are not changed in the editing process. "We believe the light given by God to His servants is by the enlightenment of the mind, thus imparting the thoughts, and not (except in rare cases) the very words in which the ideas should be expressed." Revision of grammar and words was to be done "without in any measure changing the thought."<sup>57</sup> According to this understanding, the thoughts were "inerrant." But the problem was that as church leaders like Prescott, Spicer, Daniells and Crisler worked with Mrs. White it would appear that sometimes thoughts about historical events, people, dates and even the expression of doctrinal positions needed to be checked and corrected and clarified. The writing and publishing process incorporated the seeking of feedback from knowledgeable others followed by the revising and modifying of ideas in the preparation

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of her writings and therein lay the theological problem for which some solution needed to be found. This provided much of the cognitive dissonance" or tension for informed church leaders as they wrestled in their minds to find a more satisfactory formula of words in which to express and affirm the important and essential principles that related to the "mystery" of the linking of the human and the divine in inspiration.

Another theme that was laid down early in Adventist understanding was the subservient relationship of the Spirit of Prophecy to Scripture. The "lesser light – greater light" relationship was clear in



concept, but not so clear in practice. But in principle, the nature of the Spirit of Prophecy was such that it was not an interpreter of or an authority over Scripture.

Prescott talked a good deal about the authority of Scripture and the infallibility of God's word. But he appears not to articulate anywhere a mechanical, and dictation view of "verbal" inspiration. At the 1893 General Conference in Battle Creek he delivered a series of ten sermons on "The Word of God" that were published as a series in the *Review*. In these sermons he talked about infallibility, but not about "verbal inspiration." His stress on infallibility was both a polemic against the way infallibility was newly being presented in the Catholic church with the Pope's recent claims to infallibility (1870) and at the same time an argument against "higher criticism" and "modernism." In this context Prescott asked,

I want to know if you ever heard anyone say that the difference between Seventh-day Adventists and Roman Catholics was that Roman Catholics had a man for a pope . . . .  
That grows altogether out of a misunderstanding of the nature of the Spirit of Prophecy.<sup>58</sup>

Prescott was adamant that Adventists avoid the Roman Catholic error of asserting that some authority outside the Bible was needed to interpret the Bible. They were in danger of falling into this error, he suggested. God could speak infallibly through his Word and not need an outside interpreter for God was His own expositor.<sup>59</sup>

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In this series of talks there is no mention of "verbal inspiration" as a mechanical dictation kind of process. While recognising that the line between "word" and "thought" was difficult to draw, if any adjective was needed, suggested Prescott he would choose plenary" rather than "verbal".<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, F. M. Wilcox, editor of the *Review* and respected thought leader in the church asserted that inspiration was "verbal" but it seems as if he meant by this simply that the revelation was expressed in words. The term verbal inspiration" may then be an unhelpful term in trying to understand people's viewpoints because of its nuanced use. As one observer has noted, in its best expression as nuanced by contemporary evangelical scholars, the concept of verbal inspiration has nothing to do with verbal dictation but rather means that God influenced the writers in such a way that their statements (propositions) are trustworthy vehicles for God's revelation of himself in history, especially in the Christ-event.<sup>61</sup> People using the term may well use it to convey different concepts. Focusing on this expression then may turn out to be a red herring. This highlights clearly that the problem for the church was not verbal inspiration" but rather how to understand infallibility and inerrancy. According to the General Conference and Mrs. White, inspiration" applied to the person God used and it secured the ideas" that were conveyed. The fact that even then some of those thoughts may be mistakenly expressed or plainly mistaken, even if not often, was a concept that both Prescott and the church struggled with and initially resisted. They were uncomfortable with it because it could lead to misunderstanding. In 1906 in the midst of the Kellogg controversy, for example, when some of the Kellogg faction were trying to explain the confusion and the conflict in the church they attempted to justify schismatic behaviour by suggesting that there was inconsistency in the messages from Mrs. White. Against this Prescott editorialised in the *Review*:

Some confound the prophet with the message which the prophet bears. A true prophet is still a fallible being but the message of the true prophet is infallible. A prophet may make mistakes in personal conduct, just as other individuals, but the Lord does not

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make mistakes in the messages which he sends. Some would be saved from confusion if they would bear in mind this simple distinction.<sup>62</sup>

It is evident from this that Prescott was clear in his commitment to the integrity of Mrs. White, and the integrity of her messages. The evidence from his later ministry in the church is that at the personal spiritual level he read and was enriched by her writing and in his work as an administrator he endeavoured to consistently follow her counsel, even at times when it did not seem consistent or rational to do so.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore he did what he could to protect and enhance the special character of her work. In 1912, for example, he remonstrated with W. C. White because White had listed on letterheads that Mrs. White was an "author" and "publisher" in a commercial sense and listed W. C. White as her "business agent." Prescott pointed out that he thought this demeaned "the peculiar character of her writings" by which he meant their inspired, spiritual character.<sup>64</sup> W. C. White consequently discontinued the practice. Prescott clearly accepted the fact of Mrs. White's inspiration and her special role. It would seem then that it was not his own distinctive and "defective" view of inspiration that was the problem behind his 1915 letter, as Arthur White suggests. If there was a problem of inadequacy in the way the doctrine of inspiration was understood it was much more widespread than just with Prescott. The whole church leadership struggled with the cognitive dissonance inherent in their convictions about the role and authority of Mrs. White. And the 1919 Bible Conference and followup meetings indicate that history and Bible teachers also experienced the dissonance.

The issue that Prescott, Spicer, Daniells and others wrestled with related to the nature of her authority when it came to the establishing of historical facts, the resolving of disputed interpretations of Scripture or history and the determining of doctrinal truth from Scripture. They believed that her authority did not extend to these areas. Her writings did not function as a control" in such matters. And they believed that it was in this area that many of the old school in the church had turned into a cul-de

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sac. Prescott's letter attributes much of this wrong use to the wrong impressions about the way Mrs. White prepared her writings. He felt that the White Estate staff had inadvertently and unconsciously fostered these wrong understandings of the process of her work and this contributed to people making a wrong use of the writings and putting them in a place that they ought not to occupy. It was this conviction that underlay Prescott's criticism that unintentional deception" had been practised.

## V. Unintentional "Deception"?

There are several episodes that help to elucidate the criticism that Prescott made of his colleagues at the White Estate and that help illustrate why he believed as he did concerning the limits that applied to the authority of the writings.

During late 1907, the Elmshaven staff were preparing a series of articles on the Ezra period compiled from previous writings of Mrs. White. Clarence Crisler was doing most of the work and these were being sent across to Washington where Prescott was publishing them in the Review. The fifth article in the series raised a problem for Prescott. This article contains the following sentence concerning the delay in the re-building of the post-exilic temple,

The victory was finally gained and the forces of the enemy were held in check all the days of Cyrus, who reigned for seven years, and all the days of his son Cambyses (named Ahasuerus in Ezra 4:6) who reigned about seven and a half years.<sup>65</sup>

On checking his encyclopedias and historical authorities, Prescott found that while some writers took the same position (concerning Cambyses), he explained later to W. C. White, "there are other writers who disagree with this position and the whole question is a matter of controversy." Prescott on his own initiative changed the sentence by striking out the parenthetical statements before he published the articles. He then also mentions another problem in the same article where the false Smerdis was stated

to be the Artaxerxes of Ezra 4.7. Prescott then wrote to W. C. White explaining what he had done and why. In his letter he raised the question,

. . . is it proper to settle these historical matters of controversy by a statement in your mother's article unless she has had special light on these historical matters? I am somewhat at a loss to know how these historical controversies can thus be settled."<sup>66</sup>

He explained his purpose in making the unauthorized changes. "My purpose is to protect these writings from unfriendly criticism and attack, and I do not wish anything to be put out which will serve as ammunition for the enemy's guns." He also expressed a concern that he did not want those critical of the Church to learn of what he did.

W. C. White received the letter but, because he was going off to Mexico on Church affairs, he asked Clarence Crisler to respond. Clarence Crisler wrote Prescott informing him that the Elmshaven staff would greatly appreciate a visit from the professor because they were facing many similar problems on a wide front in this area of historical authority and they earnestly desired the benefit of his scholarly expertise.

First of all, I want to tell you of our great desire that you visit us at the time of the Pacific Union Conference and for some weeks afterward. . . . Please come. I feel personally as if you must come; and this is the way Elder White feels. Sister White would be so glad to have you close by for a few weeks . . . a visit from you just now is really imperative. . . . I am sure that the help you could thus give would greatly encourage Sister White, to say nothing of the uplift it would give our entire office force, and the good it might do to the general cause.<sup>67</sup>

Prescott interrupted his schedule at the Review and travelled across the continent so that he could spend an extended period

with the workers at Elmshaven. The many things that the Elmshaven staff needed help with included the completion of the articles on the Ezra period which was "only one of several hard problems." They needed help also, explained Crisler, in studying "the charge of plagiarism," in studying out "the plan for the completion of articles on Old Testament History," outlining some of "the essential features of such articles," and planning out ways of "safeguarding these writings from the attacks of critics in the future." There were many other manuscripts nearly ready for publication with which they also needed help and so many matters they wanted to discuss "concerning which it is almost impossible to write."

The fact that the question Prescott had raised with the Elmshaven staff was a shared question in spite of it being very sensitive is indicated by Crisler's response. He reported that he did not know how W. C. White would answer the question but he himself had often thought about it and he desired to talk it through with Prescott. "I should prefer not to write about it, as when writing, I make a wretched mess of such things, unless I write at great length. I could not write briefly in response to this question, without laying myself liable to misunderstanding. But I am very glad that you have raised the question, and I hope soon to talk with you about it."<sup>68</sup> It would seem that the usual definitions of "inspiration" were being stretched even for Mrs. White's close helpers.

It is important to note that the letters that Crisler, W. C. White, and Mrs. White herself wrote after Prescott's extended visit in 1908 are all very positive about the value of Prescott's help. He had worked through a mountain of manuscripts with them and had written a new publisher's forward for Steps to Christ. The staff and Mrs. White were greatly encouraged and helped by Prescott's work with them despite Arthur White's later attempt to portray this interaction as business as usual at Elmshaven.

"Our future work will be done with more assurance and courage on account of the counsels we have received," commented Crisler. For W. C. White, it was a "splendid" visit.<sup>69</sup>

This view of the value and credibility of Prescott's help in the

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White Estate work seems to be distinctly at odds with the extended negative *ad hominem* argument that Arthur White makes in his paper to denigrate and diminish the stature and character of Prescott. The episode also clearly highlights the tension that Prescott and other church leaders experienced in regard to their convictions about inspiration. Despite, the formal General Conference 1883 statement on thought inspiration which asserted that editorial changes were made "without in any measure changing the thought," here was a process in which thoughts, "ideas" and pieces of information were being changed, corrected, clarified or deleted because they were or might be wrong.

Crisler explained in his December 14 letter that the Elmshaven staff were facing real difficulties and some anxiety over the recently published Kolvoord-Kellogg pamphlet criticising the church's interpretation of Daniel 8:14, Dr Stewart's "Blue Book" criticisms of Mrs. White put out from Battle Creek as well as the matter of the Ezra articles. Two weeks later, on December 27, Crisler took up in a further letter the problems with the Ezra articles in greater detail. This letter is quite frank in its discussion of the difficulties and makes important explanations about the role and function of the editorial assistants, as well as the way the editorial assistants resolved matters of historical uncertainty in the making of Mrs. White's writings. They operated on the basis of the consensus of historical reference works or authorities.

It was for this reason that the editorial staff gave such care to assembling extracts from the historical sources as background for the historical material in the revised version of *The Great Controversy*. As Crisler had earlier explained to Mrs White, the material would demonstrate "that the positions you have taken in Great Controversy," and the historical statements you have made, are in harmony with the best historical records." Although Spicer thought the book should have been changed further, Crisler thought that the book would "bear the severest tests." But it was clear to Prescott and Spicer if not to Crisler that this was a time-bound concept of historical truth. The extracts represented current

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historical understanding. They did not guarantee accuracy. Should historical research or archival discovery at some later time reveal that an historical account should be reported differently then the positions that had been taken would not be correct or in harmony with the reality.<sup>70</sup>

Crisler's 1907 letter also indicates that the editorial assistants at this time appear to have had had considerably more latitude in the editorial process than has previously been recognized. Crisler states that in this series it is the editors who determine whether certain materials are left in or left out according to their evaluation of their suitability or accuracy.

There are many things that are a matter of more or less controversy, and these we try to touch as lightly as possible. . . . We greatly desire that you shall read the remaining articles, and eliminate any portions that you fear may do more harm than good . . . . Do you think that the expression used to indicate the family relationship of Esther and Mordecai, is a proper expression . . . We realize very keenly our inability to see many points that should be closely scrutinized; and hence we feel the need of critical help.<sup>71</sup>

Regarding the earlier articles Elmshaven had sent across to Washington for publication he commented "if we had studied the articles more carefully with the thought of eliminating or safeguarding those things that might be used, or misused, by our enemies . . . we should have found things that have been allowed to slip through." Crisler asked Prescott to read the remaining articles that had been sent across

to him and [on his own judgment] eliminate any portions that you fear may do more harm than good" meaning that portions should be deleted because they may contain mistaken information or mis-stated information.<sup>72</sup> This was a discussion between editors.

The problem of the need for correction after publication became even more complicated when books needed to be translated into the other languages. Preserving the exact meaning

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of an idea without some change in nuance or modification in implication posed a significant challenge. For example, for many years in the Spanish edition of *Patriarchs and Prophets* Revelation 1.10 was quoted from the Spanish Bible as Sunday instead of the Lord's Day. The error in the book led to it not being able to be sold for many years until a correction in the relevant signature could be made. Difficulty was also encountered with the German translation of the *Desire of Ages* over the account of the order of the events at the Lord's supper and the role of Judas. This had significant pastoral theology implications for European Adventists.<sup>73</sup>

In this case, changes had been introduced by an editor in the German, French, Danish and Swedish translations of the *Life of Christ* in order to achieve harmony between them on the idea that Judas had left the upper chamber before the institution of the Lord's Supper. But the later English *Desire of Ages* described a slightly different order of events with significantly different meaning deriving from the sacral order. In preparing the translation for the new version, Conradi argued that the original order was more consistent with scripture and with what Mrs. White had written elsewhere previously. And he cited strong pastoral reasons about the need not to confuse church members.

W. C. White, on the other hand was unwilling to approve a revision to maintain the old order. He explained that he had changed his view when he read what his mother had written on the subject in Australia and the new "lessons brought out" in the new *Desire of Ages* seemed to him to "be of great value to the Christian Church." He too cited a strong pastoral rationale, but for not changing. Differences between the various translated versions would create a "lack of confidence." He felt that Mrs White's later expanded ideas were definite and that they would be "thrown into perplexity if we take the liberty to change the statements of the author." Dropping statements that might give offence to the legal authorities in Europe and thus prevent the circulation of a book as had happened with *The Great Controversy* he could feel comfortable with. But changing the sequence of things in the Communion Service he thought ill-advised. But he did agree that the word

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sacrament" which Mrs. White had newly used in the English version of *Desire of Ages* to describe the last supper could be changed if it conveyed problematic different meanings to European readers. On this matter he had consulted with F. M Wilcox and both thought that "the use of the word in the English book was correct." But if it conveyed a wrong idea to European Adventists it could be substituted. It was therefore not used in the German translation although on this one word hangs a great deal of meaning.<sup>74</sup> It is important to note again that these discussions were between editors. How many such cases like this there were is not clear but the occurrence of even just a few created the theological dilemma.

The dilemma over the translation and editing problem poses an interesting question. Should the theory which has been adopted to explain the practice then determine the practice or should the practice itself as observed determine the kind of theory adopted to explain the practice and which then might need to be adjusted or adapted to fully explain the practice? The uniqueness and the mystery" or the special nature of the charismatic gift as it was exercised in Mrs White was acknowledged by all the participants in the discussions that flowed around the problem of how to understand and deal with the work and practice of the editorial assistants. That was a given. But how best to describe it was a



challenge. Was W. C. White's reluctance to make the changes requested by Conradi conditioned by the need to limit or deny changes because the editorial scope of work needed to fit within the limits of the definitional statement of 1883 that did not extend to embracing "changes in thought"? Or because changes in the ideas had already been made and were being made in order that there be consistency in the writings and with known facts and that they be suitable and accessible for the intended readership, should the theoretical statement on inspiration developed to explain the complexity of the process be broadened to make it more adequate? Clearly, ideas and thoughts had been and were being revised, beyond the scope of the 1883 more complete definition of the nature of inspiration. Even the concept of "thought inspiration" was

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proving inadequate to fully describe the complexity and the implications of the processes involved. The idea of "no change needed" was now being modified by the addition of "except as necessary in history."

The December 1907 letters from Crisler also make it clear Prescott was very familiar with the problem of what sort of authority in these areas could be attributed to Mrs. White's writings. As mentioned earlier, during the years between 1908 and 1915, Prescott's reputation suffered badly at the hands of those like S. N. Haskell, J. N. Loughborough, J. S. Washburn and F. C. Gilbert who invested the writings with a final absolute authority and a strict controlling authority over the interpretation of Scripture. This was an authority Prescott knew they did not have. He also knew from his contact with the field that the average church member had the idea that Mrs. White's writings were produced differently from the way they were then actually being produced and that this was leading them to attribute to the writings a role and an authority that he believed was not correct.

In his paper, Arthur White, in his comments on the editorial process continues to describe the work of the editorial assistants as simply to "correct grammar, eliminate repetition, and at times supply an appropriate synonym for a word used too frequently."<sup>75</sup> Compared with Crisler's description it is clear that the process was considerably more complex and comprehensive than that. Clearly the editorial assistants did not write the materials. Mrs. White was the author. In this matter Arthur White is correct and the critics are decidedly wrong. But authorship is not the issue here. The issue is that the creative work of the editorial assistants involved designing the sequence of materials, determining the appropriateness of one passage over another to describe events, passing over other material or deleting sentences because they were deemed unsuitable for the specific historical or theological topic being discussed. This process was more extensive than was usually understood. This had a bearing on the status of the authority of such material, according to Spicer and Prescott. The question was also not really how many corrections needed to be made. The fact

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that there were some was sufficient to pose the problem. In response to information that I provided in my 1980 critique of the first edition of his paper, information of which he was apparently unaware, Arthur White reluctantly acknowledges that Prescott had been extensively involved in the editorial work on some of Mrs. White's writings. For example, the professor had compiled and edited the materials that comprise *Christian Education* published in 1892, a task he had done without direct supervision of Mrs. White. He had also compiled and edited the 1897 collection *Special Testimonies on Education* without direct supervision. These publications were collections of letters that had been sent to Prescott as Education Secretary of the General Conference or as President of Battle Creek College. He reported that he had made only "such changes as seemed to be necessary for clearness." But after his involvement assisting Marian Davis with the preparation of materials for *Desire of Ages* in 1895-1896 he subsequently advised that the book *Christian Education* could be revised with "a more careful editing of the matter."<sup>76</sup> Arthur White also concedes that Prescott had been involved in helping clarify historical information for the 1907 Ezra material. But the concession seems reluctant. It

is surprising that much later W. C. White went so far as to claim in a report to Loma Linda College Bible teacher Taylor G. Bunch that Prescott had not been involved in editorial assistance work at all. "I wish to say with all truthfulness and emphasis that Professor Prescott had nothing to do with the preparation of manuscripts for the printer." In the light of the evidence above, this is clearly an untrue statement and reflects perhaps a failing memory if taken as a general statement.<sup>77</sup> Arthur White after conceding Prescott's involvement in clarifying historical matters continues to suggest that "this was not different from Mrs. White's usual procedure" and that "Mrs. White did not claim to be an authority on the details of history."<sup>78</sup> Again, over-simplifying the role of the editorial assistants, Arthur White explained that it "was the task of the assistants to pull her materials together in their *logical* order, to see that in form they were in harmony with the rules of grammar and employed words that were

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winning and would appeal. Only a defective concept of inspiration could make this seem dishonest . . ." (italics mine)<sup>79</sup> But White overlooked the matter that the "logical" order is not actually an inherent or self-evident order but an order suggested or created by Prescott and Crisler working together. Perhaps "natural" or chronological" might better express what Arthur White meant. But he also diminishes or overlooks the significance of the role of the editorial assistants in correcting ideas and information in the materials that Mrs. White had already written and published elsewhere. And for Prescott and Crisler and others while this clearly did not mean the denial of inspiration, it did have implications for the understanding of the breadth of meaning of the concept and the nature of its authority in these areas. And it indicated that the 1883 statement by itself was still rather inadequate. W. C. White in addressing questions in 1928 from L. E. Froom about the work of the editorial assistants stressed that Mrs. White was always in control of the process. He was concerned that any focus on the work of the assistants would detract from the value of the messages themselves. He also was concerned to emphasise that Mrs. White was "remarkably acute in detecting any error made by copyists or by copy editors." He could not "too frequently restate the fact that Sister White's mind was keenly active with reference to the contents" of the articles and books published under her name. It was pastorally helpful to focus on the spiritual value of the messages the material contained. But again, the letter tends to idealise the process although he did concede that in the last few years of Mrs. White's life "her supervision was not so comprehensive." She was still involved, however "as far as possible in the process."<sup>80</sup> Spicer on the other hand believed that, "There has been too much of an effort on the part of the book-makers, I believe, to emphasize the fact that they do it all under observation, as though that would make sure of inspiration and correct work . . ."<sup>81</sup> Both Prescott and Spicer argued on a strong pastoral basis that the actual situation needed to be more widely known. Arthur White contends in his explanation of Prescott's 1915 letter that "no significance should be attached to the fact that not

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everyone was aware of this [editorial] procedure." Prescott had pointed out, to the contrary, that the widespread lack of awareness was indeed significant, that it amounted to unintentional deception" and that it contributed to a dangerous misunderstanding of the nature of the writings. In retrospect, in the light of the detail in Crisler's letters compared to Arthur White's explanations about the editorial process it seems clear that there has been a tendency to oversimplify or idealise the role of the editorial assistants and the extent of Mrs. White's involvement in the "critical" reading of her manuscripts particularly in her later years.

## VI. Shared Anxieties

Although as previously noted, Prescott was not alone in his concerns about the misunderstanding of Mrs. White's writings, it is worth elaborating on this point in order to understand the strength of Prescott's concerns. An important consideration that flies in the face of Arthur White's *ad hominem* approach to diminishing the force of Prescott's 1915 observations is that Prescott is not the only

church leader to raise the issue. White implies that Prescott was an isolated voice in making his criticisms. To the contrary, other knowledgeable men in prominent positions in the church shared Prescott's perspective and his dilemma. For example, just four months prior to Prescott's April 6 letter, W. A. Spicer wrote to L. R. Conradi addressing the same problem.

Brother Town has let me read a letter from you speaking of some problems you have been sending on to Brother White concerning book revision . . . . It is too bad that the editors of these manuscripts should try and settle some of these controverted questions where authorities disagree, and where the various editors of the manuscripts evidently disagree. A larger question than the question of the mere detail of a correction or of an erroneous statement is the question as to how we shall treat these matters that have been passed through

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the hands of the various editors. We have had quite a battle, some of us, for several years, trying to make the brethren see that it was not right to claim any extraordinary authority for matters of this kind. While this is conceded freely enough in private, the difficulty has been, it seems to me, that courage has been lacking to take a straight and consistent position. Years ago, when I was out at St. Helena, I urged W.C.W. to have a statement in the revised "Great Controversy" that would relieve the whole situation. I hoped it would be there, but it has not been made. People are left to run across places where the revised edition corrects statements in the old edition, and then some poor soul has a worrying time over it, when it is altogether unnecessary.<sup>82</sup>

Spicer is clearly grappling with the same problem that Prescott addressed with W. C. White. Such things could be acknowledged in private but courage was lacking to address the situation publicly. (And there should be no diminution of the force of Spicer's observations simply because he was writing to Conradi who later left the church although an *ad hominem* approach might suggest this.) Spicer did not use the term "deception" to describe the end result of the process of dissembling but his choice of words about the lack of "courage" to take a "straight and consistent position" suggests that he meant much the same thing. Prescott was not isolated in his views. And, as with Prescott, Spicer also saw that the nub of the problem was the common perception of the way that Mrs. White supposedly wrote her books. He commented more specifically to Conradi,

The trouble is all in the book-making, and there has been too much of an effort on the part of the book-makers, I believe, to emphasize the fact that they do it all under observation, as though that would make sure of inspiration and correct work . . .

There is one thing sure, Bother Conradi, it is firmly settled that phrases and historical statements in these books have to be

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corrected just the same as in other books. Of course we are supposed to take full counsel with the author in making corrections. On the other hand, I believe the editors have been a little hard to deal with in accepting suggestions, though no doubt they have felt that they have been very liberal. A comparison of the new and old edition of "Great Controversy" will show many things changed, although some things should surely have been corrected further.<sup>83</sup>

This was editing and revision that involved not just grammar and smooth English expression. This involved correction of wrong information, the correction of thoughts and ideas, which challenged the commonly held assumptions of inspiration embraced under the theory of "thought inspiration." It needs to be reiterated that Spicer was not an unreliable and untrustworthy witness as White seems to infer about Prescott. Spicer at the time was the Secretary of the General Conference and was appointed as President eight years later eventually serving for two terms.

As observed already, it seems clear that towards the end of Mrs. White's life, and certainly after her death, the Elmshaven staff presented more and more a sort of idealised picture of the role of the circle of editorial assistants and of the way that Mrs. White worked that did not always adequately embrace the full complexity of the process.<sup>84</sup> When questions were asked the focus of a response would seem to be conditioned more by the need to provide a faith-affirming and confidence-building simple explanation about the book-making process than a more detailed account that explored the implications. Thus answers were given that were too simple although evidently not intentionally so.

In conclusion, it seems clear from the evidence available that W. C. White in fact did share basically the same view of inspiration as W. W. Prescott and the same view of the nature of her authority. This is evidenced in the kind of statements that W. C. White made to the reactionary fundamentalist ministers in the church in the midst of the theological controversy over the "daily" of Daniel 8.14 and the use of Mrs. White's statement in Early Writings. W. C. White

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wrote,

. . . I am specially interested to see the denomination spared from being placed in a position where its preachers will be encouraged to teach something that they can not prove from the Bible and history because some of their brethren think that a statement from Mother's writings requires them to take this position. I am particularly desirous to see Mother's work and her writings spared from being placed by a few of our brethren in such an unnatural position.<sup>85</sup>

What W. C. White is advocating here in regard to historical authority would also apply to doctrinal authority. The "daily" wasn't simply a matter of history. It related to the interpretation of a biblical term and thus had implications for prophetic interpretation. The line differentiating history and theology in this case is not a clear line. The church's long standing understanding that Mrs. White's writings did not have a controlling role in the interpretation of Scripture is particularly relevant to the discussion of the "daily" and is what W. C. White is alluding to here. He reported to Daniells that he had come to the conviction that the conflict over "the daily" itself was not so important as the larger problem of attitudes between brethren when there was difference in viewpoint and how the Church should use or not use his mother's writings to resolve disputed issues. Haskell had made it quite public that he would only change his mind of the issue if there was a "direct testimony of Sister White."<sup>86</sup> Finally Mrs. White herself intervened in the dispute to let it be known that her writings were not to be used to settle the issue one way or the other.<sup>87</sup>

W. C. White may also have been prepared at times to go further, more so, it seems than even Prescott was, and make a distinction between inspired counsel and uninspired judgement in Mrs. White's writings. This was a theoretical stance advocated in the 1880s for a time by George Butler through a problematic series of articles in the Review.<sup>88</sup> This approach to resolving the cognitive dissonance inherent in the firmly held convictions on inspiration

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had also been shown to also have its inadequacies. But the tension was so acute at times that a variety of resolutions were sought and employed. And in spite of its dangers, according to W. A. Spicer, W. C. White suggested it as way to resolve some of the difficulties. Spicer, who agreed with the approach, reported,

It seems to me that there is a school of handling the Testimonies by an arbitrary process that cannot stand. I believe Brother White stated the eternal truth at the recent council when he made the distinction between the inspired counsel and the uninspired judgment. I

know some did not like it, who think they stand as no one else for the Spirit of Prophecy. But I believe they who would find fault with Brother White's statement unconsciously deny the very foundation of the gift. They put Sister White where no prophet ever stood. How careful Paul was, even in the few brief letters preserved of his writings, to say that in some matters he spoke not of commandment, but that he thought in those also he had the spirit. This thought opens up the whole field of the great care needed in interpreting the instruction of the testimonies, so that in seeking to get what is needed we may not violate the commandments themselves.<sup>89</sup>

Although W. C. White allowed this position in principle and enunciated it publicly at the 1913 General Conference session that year, he was reluctant to be specific in the application of the principle for fear of being misunderstood.<sup>90</sup> Spicer was not so reticent. His letter is an earnest protest over the more than three million dollar indebtedness of the denomination in 1911 as a result of failing to follow a "no debt" policy and as a result of failing to use common sense. He cited the case of the Philadelphia Sanitarium as an example, I know some would say very quickly that when the Testimonies speak of a thing that ought to be done at once, any board or committee should do at once and see that it is done. Such would say that I did not believe the Testimonies in suggesting that any committee charged with the responsibility for an enterprise

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should follow the instruction in harmony with the principles of policy laid down both in the Bible and the Testimonies.

Men catch at phrases in a communication, and follow that phrase against every consideration, and feel that you haven't faith if you do not follow along with them. But how often has Sister White used that phrase, "You must use your senses," . . . The brethren in Pennsylvania felt that a letter written by Sister White in the Atlanta Railway Station, giving them some cheery words fully authorized them to go on with their enterprise at a time when they could have withdrawn for two thousand dollars. Looking at it from the financial point of view, several brethren of the General Conference counseled No, and the fears of the brethren in Philadelphia counseled No. But evidently feeling that every word from Sister White was a command, they took her cheery phrase to go forward, regardless of their fears, and launched on their way to a certain disaster. . .<sup>91</sup>

## VII. Conclusion

Prescott's letter of 1915 spoke of his concern that while W. C. White conceded such positions in private he could not find the courage or an adequate and appropriately safe strategy by which to successfully educate the church membership publicly in these views. As a result, Prescott himself was left to be misunderstood, attacked, and to suffer the maligning of his reputation and his character. In Arthur White's paper attempting to explain the background of Prescott's letter the misunderstanding and maligning of character has continued when in reality Prescott's views of Ellen White's role and authority are not far different, if at all, from those of W. C. White and W. A. Spicer and other General Conference leaders. The difference between them was ultimately only in the matter of how to try to redress the wrong impressions. For this reason Prescott asserted that there was "much more anxiety to prevent a possible shock to some trustful people than to correct

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error." Although, he had talked with W. C. White and other Elmshaven staff for years about the problem the discussions had brought no change. For that reason he was convinced the church was "drifting toward a crisis," which he was sure would "come sooner or later and perhaps sooner."



The problem of the misunderstanding of the nature of Mrs. White's writings was not resolved in 1915 nor later in 1919 although the matter was addressed at length when it raised its substantial head at that time. But the task then was also too difficult. Instead, as Michael Campbell has recently observed, the situation soon became even more complicated because of much broader shifts taking place in the surrounding American culture and the 1919 conference polarised Adventist theology into two camps which continue to impact the church.<sup>92</sup>

Arthur White's 1981 discussion of Prescott's criticism could perhaps largely be viewed as an unwitting attempt to shoot the messenger rather than to listen to the message. On the positive side, however, the paper takes the opportunity to explain and discuss some of the difficulties W. C. White later experienced in carrying on the work of the Estate.

The following year, the first International Prophetic Guidance Workshop convened in Washington, airing again the same issues with the addition of significant new information. The fresh data shared with delegates in 1982 expanded the understanding of the complex "mystery" of inspiration as it manifested itself in Mrs. White; the resolve seemed evident that the Church would address the crisis in hermeneutic" seen as deriving from the fact that "most SDAs probably have a seriously impaired view of inspiration/ revelation." One of the consequent outcomes was identified as Adventists being in "danger when they discover factual data contrary to their view" of inspiration: "instead of adjusting their theory to fit demonstrated facts," some discard the prophet instead of the bad theory. While the Church's "imperative obligation" to readjust our theory of inspiration so the theory arises out of the data" so as "not to impose our theory over the data" was clearly expressed, it has again proved difficult to educate the Church in

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ways that avoid continuing misunderstandings.<sup>93</sup> The problem of ongoing education is a priority for the immediate future. Prescott's criticism in his anguished letter of 1915 still remains to be addressed because with each new generation of church members the problem is confronted anew. For the health of the church a programme of continuing education in this area would seem to be essential.

## Endnotes

- 1 The complete text of the letter is provided in appendix A. [\[back\]](#)
- 2 The letter was cited in Desmond Ford, "Daniel 8.14: The Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment," Sanctuary Review Committee Manuscript, 1980 Vol 1. p 587. [\[back\]](#)
- 3 Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White, April 6, 1915," January 18, 1981. [\[back\]](#)
- 4 Robert W. Olsen, *One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary and the Spirit of Prophecy* (Washington, D. C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981) pp 82 – 86. [\[back\]](#)
- 5 Arthur L. White, pp 28 – 29. [\[back\]](#)
- 6 G. M. Valentine "A Response to Two Explanations of W. W. Prescott's 1915 Letter", June, 1981. R. W. Olsen to G. M. Valentine June 30, 1981. After obtaining feedback and advice from Robert Olsen, General Conference archivist, Bert Haloviak and White Estate assistant, Ron Graybill, it was intended to further revise the material before it was forwarded to Elder Arthur White. At the time the author was nearing the completion of a doctoral research project on the life and work of W. W. Prescott at Andrews University under the supervision of Professor George Knight. [\[back\]](#)
- 7 W. A. Spicer, to L. C Conradi, November 30, 1914. [\[back\]](#)

8 R. W. Olsen to G. M. Valentine, June, 30, 1981. [\[back\]](#)

9 W. C. White to Ms Hilda Gunther, February 20, 1931. [\[back\]](#)

10 "Your first edition of this paper was taken very seriously by Arthur White. He has made some major changes in his paper. .

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. I very much appreciate your careful criticism and especially the kindly tone of your document. This has helped us a great deal." R. W. Olsen to G. M. Valentine, June 30, 1981. "The article is very informative and helps to correct some misleading impressions which were created by those who have previously dealt with the topic." Ron Graybill to G. M Valentine June 3, 1981. The changes adopted by Arthur White were based on the first draft version of the response paper because unfortunately, although request had been made that it not be circulated until it had been revised, somehow it reached Arthur White's desk before it was revised. Arthur L. White to G. M. Valentine, June 16, 1981. [\[back\]](#)

11 The response paper was not circulated although it was made available for researchers visiting the various EGW Research Centres. [\[back\]](#)

12 William G. Johnsson, "The Best from the Press in '92," *Adventist Review*, December 10, 1992, p 12. [\[back\]](#)

13 Gilbert M. Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation*, (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 2006) pp 250 – 269. [\[back\]](#)

14 W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, May 7, 1915. [\[back\]](#)

15 A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, December 20, 1909 and March 31, 1910. [\[back\]](#)

16 A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, June 25, 1908. [\[back\]](#)

17 E. G. White to S. N. Haskell, May 30, 1896. The comment was made about his gospel preaching. [\[back\]](#)

18 W. C. White knew of "no else living who could give it (the new Review and Herald publishing house) such a high intellectual and spiritual mold." W. C. White to A. G. Daniells and W. W. Prescott January 25, 1905. [\[back\]](#)

19 Episodes frequently recounted by his critics included his support for Anna Phillips in 1892 and his encouragement of the exodus from Battle Creek in 1894. Prescott was embarrassed by the episodes but they occurred not because of a lack of confidence in Ellen White but rather a result of 'reacting too eagerly to some of the things Mrs. White had written. Mrs. White understood

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this. See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation*, p 87-89. [\[back\]](#)

20 When some at the 1919 Bible Conference echoed similar sentiments Prescott's response was a challenge for his critics to just read his books and see how much he used them. "If any of you do not think I teach the Spirit of Prophecy, just come with me and look at my books . . . See how I have marked them." "Transcript of the 1919 Bible Conference", July 14, 1919. [\[back\]](#)

21 Arthur White quotes an observation from his mother in the 1901 period about his mother's concern over the use of strained language to express the meaning of sanctification. He assumes that these

concerns of his mother were made public and were expressed to Prescott as a warning. But he seems not to be aware that the comments were not made public at all or printed until later. Thus there was no warning involved or straightening out etc. E. G. White to W. W. Prescott, July 7, 1902; Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation*, pp183 – 184. [\[back\]](#)

**22** "Transcript of the 1919 Bible Teacher's Conference," July 14, 1919. In May 1902, when Prescott first checked the galley proofs of Kellogg's *Living Temple* he saw erroneous theological concepts and wrote of these to Kellogg. Kellogg's resistance to these criticisms led to a closer investigation on the part of a committee. Kellogg's continued pushing ahead with the manuscript led Prescott to comment openly in the Review. The main difficulty Prescott saw was that Kellogg's "spiritualistic philosophy" viewed God as immediately in every person and in the natural world. Prescott viewed God as present *mediately* through Christ. Prescott later wrote to Waggoner, "You know how harmoniously we worked together in England and that we seemed to see truth in about the same light until you began to present some views about the Sanctuary with which I could not agree. It seemed to me that your view that every man was a temple of God without regard to his character involved conclusions which I could not admit but as those conclusions were not then brought forward I did not feel compelled to make any public issue over this

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question. You may possibly remember how I wrote to you about this after I returned to America and met both the teaching and its conclusions here . . ." W. W. Prescott to E. J. Waggoner, November 14, 1904. [\[back\]](#)

**23** Arthur L. White, p 4. [\[back\]](#)

**24** Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, December 14, 1903; Ellen G. White to W. W. Prescott, July 7, 1902; Ellen G. White, untitled MS, July 18, 1902. See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation* p183. comments. [\[back\]](#)

**25** "But in 1901 she received light regarding his perils in imbibing some of the E. J. Waggoner teachings on sanctification, and some other points, and sounded a warning." Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White, April 6, 1915" p 4. This is misleading. [\[back\]](#)

**26** J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, "An Open Letter", May, 1922; C. E. Holmes "The Omega," 1922. [\[back\]](#)

**27** It seems that it is this particular episode that W. C. White is referring to when he reports to the Professor in 1915 that he was not able to find a good opportunity to raise the matter with his mother. "I never found an opportunity to unfold to Mother the perplexities which have added so much to your burden and sadness. . . . Mother always had a very high regard for you and Sister Prescott. . ." W. C. White to W. W. Prescott March 12, 1915. [\[back\]](#)

**28** A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, January 3, 1910; Prescott asked to be sent to New York in order to comply with the counsel from Ellen White, A. G. Daniells to E. G. White, January 2, 1910. [\[back\]](#)

**29** A. G. Daniells to G. B. Thompson, June 29, 1909. [\[back\]](#)

**30** See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation*, pp 239ff. [\[back\]](#)

**31** See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation*, pp 251 ff. A. L. White notes these matters at the end of his paper but neglects to see that they negate his contrary observation in the earlier part of his paper. [\[back\]](#)

**32** W. C. White to A. G. Daniels July 28, 1910. [\[back\]](#)

**33** W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, August 23, 1910. [\[back\]](#)

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**34** Ibid pp 214 – 238 for a full discussion of this complex controversy. Arthur White's perspective on this period seems to follow that of Haskell. [\[back\]](#)

**35** W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, July 13, & July 31, 1905; W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, August 11, 1905. A fund raising drive, advertised in the Review has promised \$15,000 for the new publishing house. Ellen White sent instructions that it should be sent to the work in the South instead. Both W. C. White and W. W. Prescott were perplexed by the switch. Previously church leaders had been sharply reproved for such practices which had been called "robbery." Prescott couldn't figure out how the diversion could be made to "look straight" and it had forced the publishing house to breach another policy and go into debt. The professor went along with the re-assignment even though it appeared inconsistent. This was characteristic of his response. See also for example W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, September 5, 1908. [\[back\]](#)

**36** W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, October 6, 1910. [\[back\]](#)

**37** See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation*, pp 242 – 243. [\[back\]](#)

**38** S. N. Haskell to W. C. White, November 27, 1910. [\[back\]](#)

**39** *Ibid* [\[back\]](#)

**40** W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, August 12, 1910. [\[back\]](#)

**41** W. A. Spicer to L. C. Conradi, November 30, 1914. [\[back\]](#)

**42** See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation*, pp 256 – 260 for a fuller discussion of the background to the need for revisions and the difficult task of accomplishing them. [\[back\]](#)

**43** E. G. White, Manuscript 11, 1910. [\[back\]](#)

**44** See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation*, pp 120, 260 & 278. [\[back\]](#)

**45** See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation*, p 263. [\[back\]](#)

**46** W. C. White had at first thought of attending and was encouraged to do so by W. E. Howell, the Education Director. "I too wish heartily that you might attend." W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox,

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May 21, 1919; W. E. Howell to W. C. White, May 28, 1919; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, June 6, 1919. He eventually decided that staying in California to work on compiling a book on health reform should take priority. W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox, August 8, 1919. Wilcox lamented that he had decided not to attend. You might have been able to add a gourd or something even better. . ." F. M. Wilcox to W. C. White, July 25, 1919. [\[back\]](#)

**47** Arthur L. White p 21. [\[back\]](#)

**48** W. C. White to I. H. Evans, September 18, 1919. [\[back\]](#)

**49** See Valentine, *The Struggle for the Prophetic Heritage: Issues in conflict for control of the Ellen G. White Publications 1930 – 1939*. (Muak Lek, Thailand, Institute Press, 2006) pp 175. [\[back\]](#)

**50** As noted previously, the extensive published biographical material on Prescott was not available to Arthur White at the time he wrote his paper, although the source documents were. Without the opportunity to undertake further extensive study of the documentation and relying on previous general knowledge there was an unwillingness to revise the paper further. As a result the paper is now substantially out of date and the question could be asked as to whether its use should be continued. [\[back\]](#)

**51** Arthur. L. White first edition p 15. [\[back\]](#)

**52** W. C. White to L. E. Froom January 8, 1928; Louis Gaussen, *Theopneustia: The Bible, Its Divine Origin and Inspiration*, trans. by David D. Scott (Cincinnati, Boston, and New York: Blanchard, 1859). [\[back\]](#)

**53** Clarence Crisler's copy of Gaussen is in the James White Library at Andrews University. It is well marked where Crisler disagrees with Gaussen's arguments against thought inspiration. [\[back\]](#)

**54** Dudley M. Canright, *The Bible From Heaven*, (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press, 1878). Canright's version was a plagiarized version of Moses Hull's earlier book and used even the same title. [\[back\]](#)

**55** S. N. Haskell to I. H. Evans, September 29, 1915. "About fifty years ago I drove three stakes down in my own experience. 1. The Bible was verbally inspired, 2. The Spirit of prophecy is as true as the Bible, 3. God gave an infallible message to fallible

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men to proclaim." Arthur White wrongly infers that Haskell got his verbal inspiration concepts from Prescott. "The Prescott Letter" p 11. [\[back\]](#)

**56** F. M. Wilcox to L. E. Froom, August 5, 1928. [\[back\]](#)

**57** *Review and Herald*, November 27, 1863. [\[back\]](#)

**58** *General Conference Bulletin*, 1893, pp 346-347. [\[back\]](#)

**59** *Ibid* [\[back\]](#)

**60** W. W. Prescott, "The Inspiration of the Scriptures," *Review and Herald*, July 13, 1905, p. 7. [\[back\]](#)

**61** Norman H. Young to G. M. Valentine, May 16, 2007. [\[back\]](#)

**62** *Review and Herald*, September 27, 1906, p 3. [\[back\]](#)

**63** For example, in the re-assigning of the appeal funds to the southern work in 1905 which looked like "robbery." W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, July 13, & July 31, 1905; W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, August 11, 1905. [\[back\]](#)

**64** W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, August 23 and September 15, 1912. White explained that he had the "business" letterheads prepared for non-Adventists but they had inadvertently been used for church correspondence. W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, August 15, 1912. [\[back\]](#)

**65** W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, December 1, 1907. [\[back\]](#)

**66** *Ibid* [\[back\]](#)



**67** C. C. Crisler to W. W. Prescott, December 14, 1907. In this handwritten letter, Crisler shares with Prescott his excitement at having found a copy of W. R. Harpers International Critical Commentary on Amos and Hosea in the local library. He rejoiced that he had found "so complete a vindication of the critical accuracy" of an exposition of Amos 7.14 in a recent editorial. [\[back\]](#)

**68** C. C. Crisler to W. W. Prescott, December 27, 1907. The complete text of this letter can be seen in Appendix B. [\[back\]](#)

**69** C. C. Crisler to A. G. Daniells, February 6, 1908; W. C. White to E. R. Palmer, February 7, 1908. [\[back\]](#)

**70** C. C. Crisler to E. G. White, August 1, 1910. W. C. White also felt good that although in some cases changes were necessary, in most cases "a defense has been found for the position taken." W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, August 12, 1910. [\[back\]](#)

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**71** C. C. Crisler to W. W. Prescott, December 27, 1907. [\[back\]](#)

**72** *Ibid* [\[back\]](#)

**73** W. C. White to L. E. Froom, June 14, 1931. See also W. C. White to N. Z. Town, May 1, 1914; L. R. Conradi to W. C. White, October 28, 1914; N. Z. Town to W. C. White, December 1, 1914; W. C. White to N. Z. Town, December 16, 1914 and W. C. White to L. R. Conradi, February 26, 1915. [\[back\]](#)

**74** Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, pp 655, 659. W. C. White to L. R. Conradi, April 13, 1914, cited in W. C. White to N. A. Town, May 1, 1914; L. R. Conradi to W. C. White, October 28, 1914; W. C. White to L. R. Conradi, February 26, 1915. As Joel Musovi notes however, Adventists adopt the Zwinglian understanding of the Lord's supper seeing it not as a sacrament but a commemoration. This is My Body", *Adventist Review*, March 15, 2007 p 27. [\[back\]](#)

**75** Arthur. L. White p 15. [\[back\]](#)

**76** W. W. Prescott to E. G. White, July 4, 1896. [\[back\]](#)

**77** W. C. White to T. G. Bunch, September 21, 1930. Bunch had written asking about how the Revised Version came to be quoted in several places in Mrs. White's writings thinking that perhaps the editorial assistants had been responsible for this and not Mrs. White herself. W. C. White responded that Mrs. White had authorized the use of the Revised Version. But in replying, although W. C. White initially referred to the specific question as to whether it was Prescott who introduced the American Revised Version into Ellen White's manuscripts his follow up statement denying Prescott's role stands as an unfortunate misleading and inaccurate generalization. The question was asked in the midst of a heated controversy that had broken out in the church about Bible Versions and W. C. White's answer was colored by that polemic. See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation*, pp 313 – 316. [\[back\]](#)

**78** Arthur L. White (1981) p 14. [\[back\]](#)

**79** *Ibid* p 15. [\[back\]](#)

**80** W. C. White to L. E. Froom, January 8, 1928. There are two letters dated January 8 but one date appears to be a

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typographical error. Either the first was actually sent on January 7, or the second was sent January 9. But both are helpful in providing detail about editorial assistants. [\[back\]](#)

**81** W. A. Spicer to L. R. Conradi, November, 1919. W. C. White commented on the impact of Mrs. White's "aged and feebleness" on her manuscript work. She did not mark the manuscripts much and it was difficult at times to understand the suggestions she might offer but was still engaged with the broad process even if more remotely or slowly. W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, August 26, 1912. [\[back\]](#)

**82** *Ibid* [\[back\]](#)

**83** *Ibid* [\[back\]](#)

**84** The "circle" of the prophet in this instance could be viewed as including people undertaking research, checking sources, drafting book design and layouts, editing manuscripts, typing copy, caring for correspondence, and managing publications and relationships with printers and publishers. [\[back\]](#)

**85** W. C. White to W. B. White, August 2, 1910. [\[back\]](#)

**86** S. N. Haskell to L. A. Smith, January 21, 1909. [\[back\]](#)

**87** W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, January 11, 1909; March 13 and 15, 1909. See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation*, p 231-235. [\[back\]](#)

**88** G. I. Butler, "Inspiration," *Review and Herald* [\[back\]](#)

**89** W. A. Spicer to A. G. Daniells, W. T. Knox, and W. C. White, December 26, 1911. [\[back\]](#)

**90** Bert Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the Daily: Background and Aftermath of the 1919 Bible and History Teachers' Conference," pp 44-47. [\[back\]](#)

**91** W. A. Spicer to A. G. Daniells, W. T. Knox, and W. C. White, December 26, 1911. [\[back\]](#)

**92** Book Review: *More Than a Prophet: How We Lost and Found Again Ellen White* by Graeme S. Bradford, Ministry, February, 2007 p 29. [\[back\]](#)

**93** See Arthur Patrick, "Graeme Bradford and Ellen White's Inspiration," [spectrummagazine.org](http://spectrummagazine.org), in the context of Patrick's longer work-in-progress entitled "The Inspired and Inspiring Ellen White: 1982 in Historical Perspective."

[Editor's note: The first two parts of Patrick's "work-in-progress" are now available. See "The Inspired and Inspiring Ellen White: 1982 in Historical Perspective" at <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/white/patrick/egw-inspired.htm> and "The Inspired and Inspiring Ellen White, Part 2: Assessing Five Examples of the Documented Evidence" at <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/white/patrick/egw-inspired2.htm> ] [\[back\]](#)

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## Appendix A

Takoma Park, D. C., April 6. 1915.

Eld. W. C. White,  
Sanitarium, Napa Co.,  
California,

Dear Brother White:-

I appreciate your letter of March 12, and I thank you for your message of sympathy concerning my father's death.

I have noted what you have said about your mother's condition, although you neglect to inclose [sic] the statement which you mentioned. When I see these early believers like your mother, my father, and Eld. Olsen passing away so rapidly, and then think of how little has really been accomplished in seriously warning the whole world of the impending second advent, I am led to wonder whether any of us now connected with this movement will, after all, live to see the consummation. It is a serious question.

It seems to me that a large responsibility rests upon those of us who know that there are serious errors in our authorized [sic] books and yet make no special effort to correct them. The people and our average ministers trust us to furnish them with reliable statements, and they use our books as sufficient authority in their sermons; but we let them go on year after year asserting things which we know to be untrue. I cannot feel that this is right. It seems to me that we are betraying our trust and deceiving the ministers and people. It appear to me that there is much more anxiety to prevent a possible shock to some trustful people than to correct error.

Your letter indicates a desire on your part to help me but I fear that it is a little late. The experience of the last six or eight years and especially the things concerning which I talked with you have had their effect on me in several ways. I have had some hard shocks to

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get over, and after giving the best of my life to this movement I have little peace and satisfaction in connection with it, and I am driven to the conclusion that the only thing for me to do is to do quietly what I can do conscientiously and leave the others to go on without me. Of course this [is] far from a happy ending to my lifework, but this seems to be the bst [sic] adjustment that I am able to make. The way your mother's writings have been handled and the false impression concerning them which is still fostered among the people have brought great perplexity and trial to me. It seems to me that what amounts to deception, though probably not intentional, has been practiced in making some of her books, and that no serious effort has been made to disabuse the minds of the people of what was known to be their wrong view concerning her writings. But it is no use to go into these matters. I have talked with you for years about them, but it brings no change. I think however that we are drifting toward a crisis which will come sooner or later and perhaps sooner. A very strong feeling of reaction has already set in.

It has been very quiet here for a few weeks, as many of the brethren are in the field. The weather has been quite cold, and we had about five inches of snow last Sabbath, but is [is] more like Spring to-day.

My mother is quite feeble, although she bears up full better than I really expected. She misses father very much. They lived together more than sixty-seven years.

The work of the office seems to be prospering and we are all very busy trying to meet the demands upon us.

I should be glad to hear from you at any time. If you can properly do so, I would be glad to have you express to your mother my sympathy for her in her affliction.

Yours faithfully W. W. Prescott (signed)

I have written this myself as I did not wish to dictate it to anyone.

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## Appendix B

Sanitarium P. O., California

December 27, 1907

Elder W. W. Prescott,  
Takoma Park Station  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Elder Prescott:

Last night I wrote you regarding the matter of "the daily," and also about the Kolvoord-Kellogg pamphlet. This morning I must write about the Ezra articles.

I think that over a year ago Elder W. C. White let you read a letter that I wrote him regarding the periods of Old Testament history not yet covered in any of Sister White's published writings. An attempt is being made to gather out from the files all that has been written on these different periods, and to prepare the matter for publication in article form. When the matter on a certain period is brought together, it is submitted to Sister White, and she generally adds to it. In the case of the Ezra articles, she had written considerable in addition to that which had been found; then, after the articles were prepared from the old and the new material, and finally submitted to her, she wrote and wrote and wrote, until we almost despaired of ever being able to complete the series. But that which she wrote gave us much that we had longed for but could not find in the files, and helped to strengthen the entire series.

In the preparation of this series, we felt the need of counsel, and often wished that we could have the help of those who were familiar with the period of the Exile and the Restoration from Babylon. I often spoke with Elder White and others about the advisability of letting others read the articles critically before sending them out from the office. Two or three times I expressed my special desire

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that you and Elder Wilcox might have sets of the articles for examination. Somehow or other, we never submitted the articles to any one outside the office. Just before sending them, I again expressed my wish that you might read them over before their publication. I am really the one to blame for not asking others to give them a critical reading.

The points that you mention in your letter to Elder White, on this series of articles, are all well taken. There are many things that are a matter of more or less controversy, and these we try to touch as lightly as possible. However, in years past several single articles have been published, in which some



positions have been taken; and these, of course, we have felt more free to use again. I have no doubt but that if we had studied the articles more carefully, with the thought of eliminating or safe-guarding those things that might be used, or misused, by our enemies, in a way to do harm, we should have found several things that have been allowed to slip through. And, as stated above, we felt the need of the keen eyes of some careful Bible student to scan every line in the entire series.

I could write at considerable length on some of the points brought out in the articles; but I am hoping to see you at the time of the Pacific Union Conference so will only add that we greatly desire that you shall read the remaining articles, and eliminate any portions that you fear may do more harm than good. As you will note, some points have been safe-guarded, others have been omitted, and, in some instances, positions have been taken.

There is one point especially on which we felt the need of great care, and that is the account of Ezra's work on the Old Testament canon. As this is well along in the series, you will have time to study the paragraphs relating to this question Sister White wrote much precious matter on the diligence with which Ezra studied the work and writings of Moses, and also of the prophets; and she dwelt at considerable length on his work as a teacher. We have felt that much of this matter should be used. As I read over the many

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paragraphs and the "fragments," or "scraps," as we call them, on the life and work of Ezra, as gleaned from our file of Sister White's writings, I could not help being deeply impressed with the difference between the picture of his life as portrayed in the fragmentary material in hand, and the picture given us by modern writers on Ezra. As you doubtless know, some of the most shocking utterances ever made by higher critics are on the work of Ezra, and the purposes that actuated him in his work. It seems as if some learned men have vied with each other in casting opprobrium on the name and deeds of Ezra. And as I read in the Bible and in the Testimonies of his great reverence for and intense interest in the instruction given by Moses, as recorded in Deuteronomy, I wondered whether the cause for adverse criticism was not the same old story of Satan's enmity for the law. Surely there is some reason why the criticism of modern times has been leveled against the good motives of Ezra, a man who stands almost preeminent as a devout student and a diligent teacher of God's holy Word. It was because of this tendency of modern writers to demerit Ezra and his work that we felt like using much that Sister White has written regarding the motives that prompted him, and the results of his work.

You will note that no position is taken as to where Ezra spent his time from the date of his journey to Jerusalem at the head of a company of exiles, to the time we find him standing by the side of Jeremiah.

An effort has been made to touch lightly on many points connected with the story of the times of Esther. In fact this was the only way we could deal with this period, inasmuch as Sister White has written very, very little on the book of Esther. Do you think that the expression used to indicate the family relationship of Esther and Mordecai, is a proper expression?

As to the Ahasuerus of Esther: In several different places, Sister White has written of this king as being Xerxes; and inasmuch as this has appeared in print, we have felt free to use that which has

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been written. In a series of this kind, it would be exceedingly difficult not to make use of that which has been written by her on this, as the story of God's people during the time of Esther is a connecting link that we could not afford to lose. For some time I have known what is said in the Encyclopedia Britannica under the name "Ahasuerus." Years ago, while taking dictation from Elder A. T. Jones on the Empire Series, I noticed that he leaned rather heavily on this article. If I remember aright, he has incorporated in his work a quotation from the article. I am also familiar with Dean Prideaux's position,

and have talked with those who held to that view. But since Sister White has appeared in print in favor of Xerxes, and since it is in harmony with the position taken by the principal writers of our denomination, we felt free to use this material, including the name that we found therein. We felt all the safer in doing this, because of the position taken by scholars who ought to know. If this position should ever be assailed, few scholars of note could be arrayed against it. Cassell, the German critic whose work on the book of Esther is very exhaustive, decided emphatically in favor of Xerxes; Keil likewise; and of English writers, Sayce, both of the Rawlinsons, Dean Spence, Raleigh, A. D. Davidson, and several others I might name, including half a dozen who have written popular books on Esther, all agree on Xerxes. With this backing, we felt safe in using what we found in the manuscripts.

I might write similarly regarding several points. Wherever we felt unsafe, we tried to examine the best authorities we had at hand, in order to make sure of our ground. Where we found serious disagreement, we were cautious about using that part of the manuscript, for fear of arousing controversy. When we found general agreement, we felt safe in using the manuscript.

But we realize very keenly our inability to see many points that should be closely scrutinized; and hence we feel the need of critical help. In your letter to Elder White, you say: "I desire to raise the question whether it is proper to settle these historical matters of controversy

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by a statement in your mother's article. Unless she has special light on these historical matters, I am somewhat at a loss to know how these historical controversies can thus be settled."

I do not know how Elder White would answer this question. I have often thought of it, and I should like to talk with you about it. I should prefer not to write about it, as when writing, I make a wretched mess of such things, unless I can write at great length. I could not write briefly in response to this question, without laying myself liable to misunderstanding. But I am very glad that you have raised the question, and I hope soon to talk with you about it.

There are many things, Elder Prescott, that we are struggling over, and we desire help. We feel as if we must have help. The problem of the completion of articles on certain periods of Old Testament history is only one of several hard problems. We want counsel on how to deal with precious material we have on some parts of the Old testament that have not been dealt with before in print. We feel as if we can not go forward without counsel. And we are in a strait place over some things published in that wicked pamphlet "A Response to an Urgent Testimony," etc. —the Stewart letter. We have some things written by noble men in England and elsewhere in defense of the Word of God and its inspiration, that we believe would be helpful in meeting the present controversy. But we can not handle these things ourselves. We need help. If you could come out here at the time of the Pacific Union, and remain afterward for a month, or even for a fortnight, you could do us a world of good, by helping us over some of these hard places. During this time, you could look over some of the things we have thought might prove helpful in strengthening faith among our own people. You could study with us the charge of plagiarism that has been preferred against Sister White. You could help us study out some plan for the completion of articles on Old Testament History, and could outline some of the essential features of such articles. You could help us to plan out some way of safeguarding these writings from the attacks of critics in the future. You would be able to talk

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with us freely about many matters concerning which it is almost impossible to write.

There are many other matters on which we need help – manuscripts nearly ready for publication, etc. I dare say you can imagine our needs better than I can enumerate them. Briefly stated, we need you and Elder Daniells with us at our office for two weeks at least, and as much longer as you can remain. We would try to arrange the work so that you could rest a part of the time, as, when you come West, you

ought to come for change and rest, as well as for the work. A visit from you just at this time would be a wonderful inspiration to our entire office force, and would enable us to work to better advantage during the year to come. While you were here, you could have such stenographic help as you might need from day to day. I am sure that Sister White could be specially pleased and cheered, if she could know that you were coming soon to help us over other hard places.

With kindest regards,

Yours very truly,

Clarence E. Crisler

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## About the Author

**Dr Gilbert Valentine** has served for the past seven years as Provost at the Church's senior College in Southeast Asia, Mission College, located in Thailand. He completed his doctoral studies at Andrews University studying under George Knight. He has had wide international experience with terms of service as both a teacher and senior administrator at a number of Adventist Colleges including Newbold College (UK), Avondale College (Australia), Pakistan Adventist Seminary and Longburn Adventist College (NZ). He has written extensively in the area of Adventist history and on the development of Adventist Theology. He is the author of *W W Prescott, Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation* published by Review and Herald (2005). His most recent work is a study of the significant power struggle in the church during the 1930s when significant tensions emerged within the top ranks of Adventist Church leadership in the quest to understand how best to manage Ellen White's legacy. *The Struggle for the Prophetic Heritage: Issues in the conflict for control of the Ellen G. White publications 1930 – 1939*, is published by the Institute of Interdisciplinary Adventist and Asian Studies at Mission College (2006).

**Mission College**, is an international university college serving the needs of the Church in the territories of the Southeast Asian Union Mission. In 1997 when the former Southeast Asian Union College then located in Singapore was forced to close the church moved its educational work to Thailand where a new International College was created out of a merger with Bangkok Adventist Hospital School of Nursing (est 1947) and Mission College, Muak Lek Campus (est 1988). Presently almost 1,000 students from over 30 different countries study at the institution.

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