

# The Spirit of Prophecy and Editorial Work

In a recently published editorial, a Seventh-day Adventist stated that when he received literature asking the reader to be open-minded he would discard it. This request was taken to be a sure sign that the material was new and divisive. As I read the article I thought how strange that many of our people so easily have a double standard in this area. When we share the Sabbath truth or the mortality of the soul we ask people to be open-minded. Yet we easily develop an attitude that says, “I already have all the truth, I have no need to further investigate anything.” Today we need not only an open mind, but an honest mind as well. Some are willing to listen and hear anything new under the sun. However, only a few are willing to follow truth when clearly presented. Perhaps no subject within Adventism today requires a more open and honest mind than an examination of how some of Sister White’s writings were put together. We enter into this study with the realization that the truth, and only the truth, can make us free.

“On April 6, 1915, W. W. Prescott wrote a letter to W. C. White in which he raised some very sensitive issues and made some very pointed comments about the writings of Mrs. White.”<sup>1</sup> Before we observe part of Prescott’s letter it should be noted that Prescott was one of the leading ministers and educators within the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the last part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century. He served as editor of the *Review & Herald* and was president of several of our colleges. He greatly appreciated and supported the work of Sister White. Prescott also labored against the Kellogg apostasy. His letter reads in part:

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. (W. W. Prescott to Willie White, April 6, 1915)

What did Prescott mean when he wrote about the “wrong view” some church members had concerning Sister White’s writings? What crisis did he feel we were drifting toward which would come sooner or later, and perhaps sooner? First, we should note that Prescott was not suggesting that Sister White was not inspired and used of God. He did, however, wish to see the church members better educated concerning the way her writings were put together.

The last two decades have brought an increased awareness of Sister White’s literary borrowing. The amount of borrowing in some instances is considerable. Some gems of thought that were once considered to have originated from her pen have been shown to be copied from others. While there are different views concerning the reason and rationale behind the borrowing, few today can, in the face of overwhelming evidence, deny its existence.<sup>2</sup> Prescott knew that many in the church were not aware of the borrowing and had misunderstandings in other areas as well.

One of those areas was the editing done to Sister White’s writings before going to print. While it is well known that Sister White had several good literary assistants who edited her work, most are under the assumption that Sister White always checked their work and approved the final drafts. Prescott

himself knew better for he had been one of the editors who worked with Sister White's manuscripts from time to time. For example, in 1893 and 1897 Prescott had "prepared two books on education for the press from manuscripts he had received, and Mrs. White saw none of the final drafts before they went to press. She was in Australia at the time. He alone did the unsupervised editing and preparing of the MS for the press."<sup>2</sup>

George Amadon, an able printer and later a trusted minister, stated to Dr. Kellogg that Sister White "never wrote the prefaces of her books. She, of course, heard them read over, but she never reads the proof. You know, Doctor, that Sister White never in the Office sat down and read proofs properly." ("An Authentic Interview between Elder G. W. Amadon, Elder A. C. Bourdeau and John Harvey Kellogg" in Battle Creek, Michigan on October 7th, 1907, p. 36)<sup>4</sup>

Concerning Prescott's work in the preparation of some of Sister White's writings, Dr. Gilbert Valentine writes:

Secondly, when in Australia, in 1896, Prescott worked very closely with Marion Davis in preparing the MS of *Desire of Ages* for publication. Reference to this is to be found in Ellen White's own diary, as well as Lacey's letter [of] 1945. Thirdly, as we have noted, Prescott assisted Crisler in 1908 in drafting out chapters and suggesting themes and ideas for some of the series on Ezra and acted as a final authority on certain critical matters regarding what to publish in certain areas. This too without Mrs. Whites supervision. ("A Response to Two Explanations of W. W. Prescott's 1915 Letter," p. 16)

The Lacey letter of 1945 Valentine mentions was from H. Camden Lacey (W. C. White's brother-in-law) to LeRoy Froom. In his letter, Lacey wrote:

Professor Prescott was tremendously interested in presenting Christ as the great 'I AM' and in emphasizing the Eternity of His existence, using frequently the expression 'The Eternal Son.' Also he connected the 'I AM' of Exodus 3:14, which of course was Christ the Second Person of the Godhead, with the statement of Jesus in John 8:58, which we all agreed to; but then linked it up also with other 'I am's' in the Gospel - 7 of them, such as 'I am the Bread of Life' 'I am the Light of the World' 'I am the Door of the Sheep' etc. all very rich in their spiritual teaching - but which seemed a little far-fetched to me especially as the 'I am' in all those latter cases is merely the copula in the Greek, as well as in the English. But he insisted on his interpretation. Sr Marion Davis seemed to fall for it, and lo and behold, when the 'Desire of Ages' came out, there appeared that identical teaching on pages 24 and 25, which, I think, can be looked for in vain in any of Sr. White's published works prior to that time!

In this connection, of course you know that Sr Marion Davis was entrusted with the preparation of 'Desire of Ages' and that she gathered her material from every available source - from Sr White's books already in print, from unpublished manuscripts, from private letters, stenographic reports of her talks, etc. - but perhaps you may not know that she (Sr Davis) was greatly worried about finding material suitable for the first chapter. She appealed to me personally many times as she was arranging that chapter (and other chapters too for that matter) and I did what I could to help her; and I have good reason to believe that she also appealed to Professor Prescott frequently for similar aid, and got it too in far richer and more abundant measure than I could render. (Letter of H. Camden Lacey to LeRoy Froom, August 30, 1945 - emphasis in original)

Besides editorial and small additions, another of Prescott's concerns may have been the actual writing out of whole chapters by assistants which were supposed to be later proofed by Sister White. In 1887, Willie White was working in Switzerland with B. L. Whitney, head of the church's publishing house in Basel, on a French and German translation of the 1884 *Great Controversy*. In a letter to C. H. Jones of the Pacific Press, White noted places in the new English edition where improvements could be made. His letter stated:

It was immediately after chapter 4, that the largest additions were to be made, and while we were all together, it seemed advisable to devote our attention to the corrections and additions to be made in other parts of the book, leaving the manuscripts for chapters 5, 6, and 7 to be prepared by Sr. Davis after Mother had gone from Basel. The work of preparing these is now nearly completed, and will soon be sent to her in England for examination. (Letter of Willie C. White to C. H. Jones, July 21, 1887 - Quoted from *Bible Study Guide* - Adventist Laymen's Foundation.)

At this point we might ask, "Why did the brethren feel they could have so much liberty with Sister White's writings?" The answer, in part, goes back to 1883. During that year the published copies of the *Testimonies* were exhausted. Action was taken during the General Conference of that year which not only provided for the reprinting of the *Testimonies*, but also gave reason for editing. The action the Conference took was printed as follows in the *Review & Herald*:

32. WHEREAS, Some of the bound volumes of the 'Testimonies to the Church' are out of print, so that full sets cannot be obtained at the Office; and—

WHEREAS, There is a constant and urgent call for the re-printing of these volumes; therefore—

*Resolved*, That we recommend their re-publication in such form as to make four volumes of seven or eight hundred pages each.

33. WHEREAS, Many of these testimonies were written under the most unfavorable circumstances, the writer being too heavily pressed with anxiety and labor to devote critical thought to the grammatical perfection of the writings, and they were printed in such haste as to allow these imperfections to pass uncorrected; and—

WHEREAS, 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; therefore—

*Resolved*, That in the re-publication of these volumes such verbal changes be made as to remove the above-named imperfections, as far as possible, without in any measure changing the thought; and further—

34. *Resolved*, That this body appoint a committee of five to take charge of the republication of these volumes according to the above preambles and resolutions. (*The Review & Herald*, November 27, 1883)

Elder George Butler appointed W. C. White, Uriah Smith, J. H. Waggoner, S. N. Haskell, and himself to the committee.<sup>5</sup> While the intentions were good, this action opened the door for further editorial work beyond the scope of the preamble and resolution. This work of editing could be done because the inspiration that was given to Sister White was declared to be thought inspiration. While Adventists have long believed that the prophets were God's penmen and not His pen, where in the Bible can we find such an example of editorial work done to a prophet's message?

## **W. C. White and his Mother's Writings**

Another factor that must be considered when examining the writings of Sister White, especially the later ones, is the influence of Willie White. After Elder James White died, Willie became his mother's closest helper. Being the son of the prophet alone does not qualify one to be the prophet's helper. Sacred history testifies that proper genealogy guarantees nothing.<sup>6</sup> Even when God places His Spirit upon a man, it is no guarantee that he will be faithful to God till his death. The example of King Saul is clear. Even though God placed His Spirit upon Saul after he had been anointed King of Israel, Saul fell into great wickedness.

One area of Willie White's influence that should be considered is his willingness to supersede his mother's wishes concerning her testimonies. A clear example of his willingness to override his mother occurred at the Berrien Springs meeting of 1904. The significance of this conference was that it occurred during the height of the controversy over Dr. Kellogg's book *The Living Temple*. The church was being split apart over the issue and there developed a great need of reconciliation between the brethren associated with Dr. Kellogg and those who were against the teachings of *The Living Temple*. Dr. Valentine gives the history in his doctoral thesis:

A session of the Lake Union Conference was scheduled for May 17-26 at Berrien Springs. With Mrs. White, her son, and the principal men of the denomination planning to be in attendance, the meeting held promise of providing an occasion for the factions in the church to reconcile their differences. Unfortunately, however, the meeting did not become an occasion for reconciliation. Instead, it served only to polarize the groups so badly that hopes for reconciliation were finally all but given up. For Prescott, who unintentionally figured rather prominently in the meeting, it was an exceedingly trying time.

Prescott joined Daniells in traveling with Mrs. White's party to Michigan. They caught the train in Washington on May 15. Shortly after Mrs. White's arrival at Berrien Springs and her inspection of the campus, she was asked to take a series of morning sermons. Her first was delivered on Wednesday, May 18, and she used the occasion to address the problem of pantheism in *The Living Temple*.

Prescott was slated to give the major Friday evening address, and he consulted with Mrs. White in advance about his topic. He too planned to talk about the pantheistic tendencies of Kellogg's book. Mrs. White advised him to go ahead. Later that Friday morning, however, Mrs. White had second thoughts. She realized that some who had come to the meeting would react negatively and might feel they should defend the doctor. She wrote a short letter urging that nothing be said that would give them occasion to side with Kellogg. She gave the letter to W. C. White to deliver to Prescott, but for some reason of his own White chose not to deliver the letter until after Prescott had given his talk. (*William Warren Prescott: Seventh-day Adventist Educator*, pp. 325, 326)

Valentine's footnote at the end of the above quote states, "This was evidently not just a case of forgetfulness. According to Kellogg, W. C. White later stated in public that Prescott had some hesitancy about giving the address but that he eventually went ahead because W. C. White himself urged him to do so." (*Ibid.*) The implications are alarming. Willie either thought he knew more about the situation than his mother, or he withheld the testimony on purpose so as to cause further strife among the brethren. Neither reason is acceptable! Is it any wonder that Dr. Kellogg called W. C. White a schemer? What was the result of Willie not delivering the Testimony? Kellogg and his sympathizers took great offense and the rift widened between sides. Tragic!

Willie, at times, seemed to have considered his judgment to be more reliable than his mother's visions. This is well illustrated in the following paragraphs from a letter Sister White wrote to Elders J. S. Washburn and I. H. Evans. Here, we also see Willie's influence upon his mother.

I am very grateful to God that the one-hundred-thousand-dollar fund has been made up, and that we have had the privilege of seeing the substantial and appropriate school buildings that have been erected at Takoma Park.

Near the close of the General Conference, in the night season many matters relative to the work in Washington and in Nashville, were opened before me. We seem to be in a council meeting. Elder Haskell, Elder Butler, and several others were talking together. Elder Haskell was telling of the opportunity that had come to them to purchase in Nashville a good church building in an excellent location. He said that five thousand dollars was asked for this church building and that the people in Nashville and the surrounding vicinity could not raise the money.

The Question was asked, "Has the full amount of the Washington Fund been raised?" The answer was "Yes, it has, and several thousand dollars' overflow has come in." A prayer and praise service was held. After the meeting, a piece of paper was placed in the hands of Elder Haskell. Unfolding it, he read, "This is to signify that we deem it to be the wise and Christian part to act toward our brethren in Nashville to place the first five thousand dollars' surplus that has come in to

Washington, in the hands of these faithful servants of God, that they may secure the house of worship in Nashville, which they greatly need. We deem that it is but loving our neighbor as ourselves to make this transfer of means to a place where at this time there is so great a necessity.”

After seeing this representation, I awoke, and I fully expected that the matter would take place as it had been presented to me. When Elder Haskell was telling me of the perplexity that they were in to carry forward the Southern work, I said, “Have faith in God. You will carry from this meeting the five thousand dollars needed for the purchase of the church.”

I wrote a few lines to Elder Daniells, suggesting that this be done. *But Willie did not see that the matter could be carried through thus, because Elder Daniells and others were at that time very much discouraged in regard to the condition of things in Battle Creek. So I told him that he need not deliver the note. (Spalding and Magan Collection, p. 377, 378)*

Dr. Kellogg accused Willie White and Sister White’s assistants of writing out testimonies and sending them out with her signature stamped on them as if they were from Ellen White.<sup>7</sup> That Ellen White did have such a signature stamp has been noted by Arthur White.<sup>8</sup>

Further, Willie White controlled the mail going both in and out of Elmshaven. An instance of this is found concerning the sending out of a letter addressed, “To Those Who Are Perplexed Regarding the Testimonies Relating to the Medical Missionary Work.”

Recently in the visions of the night I stood in a large company of people. There were present Dr. Kellogg, Elders Jones, Tenny, and Taylor, Dr. Paulson, Elder Sadler, Judge Arthur, and many of their associates. I was directed by the Lord to request them and any others who have perplexities and grievous things in their minds regarding the testimonies that I have borne, to specify what their objections and criticisms are. The Lord will help me to answer these objections, and to make plain that which seems to be intricate.

Let those who are troubled now place upon paper a statement of the difficulties that perplex their minds, and let us see if we can not throw some light upon the matter that will relieve their perplexities. (*The Later Elmshaven Years*, p. 90)

Some of the named brethren, along with others, responded to the appeal made by Sister White and wrote to her about their concerns. Arthur White states that “This letter was sent not only to those named but to about a dozen others.” (*The Later Elmshaven Years*, p. 90) However, A. T. Jones wrote in an undated letter to Sister White that he was not sent a copy:

1. I never received from you, or in any way by your instructions, any copy of that communication.
2. It was a long time before I obtained a copy. And only then did I get a copy from a brother who had never received any copy from you, although he was named in it; and he had obtained his copy from yet another brother to whom you had sent a copy though he was not named in it.

Not a soul in the world knows that I have written it, but the stenographer who has taken it down and written it out. Not a soul knows that I have sent this copy to you; and nobody but myself and the stenographer knows that it is in existence.

But will this copy that I send to you ever reach you? Will you ever have a chance to read it? Or will my letter be treated as was Dr. Stewart’s and the next thing I hear from it, it will be in the hands of Bro. Daniells, or someone else, exhibited before an audience as so many “passages of objections to the Testimonies?”

Will this letter reach you so that you will have a chance to read it yourself, or will Willie sit down by your side and read to you “some of the most objectionable passages?” (Letter of A. T. Jones to Ellen G. White, undated)

Elder Jones, like others, realized that some of Sister White’s mail, both incoming and out going, was being “pigeon-holed” by Willie White. Willie attempted to control matters to the extent that he would

not even allow his brother, James Edson White, to have a private interview with his mother when he went to California to visit her!<sup>2</sup>

## How Do We Relate?

How should we relate to the documentation presented thus far? If we attempt to ignore it and hope it will go away we are mistaken. More information, some very unpleasant, is surfacing even now. Should we turn our heads in disbelief and deny facts? This will never help, for it is truth that sanctifies. An honest appraisal of Ellen White's work has convinced me beyond any doubt that she was used of God! However, the evidence is also clear that at times *her writings* were used by men. How do we then relate? The answer is to not throw out the baby with the dirty bath water!

God has given His people the Holy Scriptures to be "the standard of all doctrines," including the doctrine of God. (*Great Controversy*, p. 595) Does that mean that we should exempt Sister White's writings from our study? No, it simply means that the gift is to be tested by the Bible and not the Bible by the gift. Elder James White considered any other stand to be "an extremely dangerous position."<sup>10</sup>

## The Weight of Evidence

Sister White has counseled us to accept the weight of evidence concerning doctrine. Even though there are a few statements of Sister White's that *appear* to be Trinitarian, the weight of evidence clearly falls on the non-Trinitarian side. We believe that most of the statements that appear to be Trinitarian will correlate with the majority of her writings with further study.

Our endeavor *is not* to discredit Sister White or destroy confidence in her ministry. This study has nothing to do with a loss of confidence in the "Testimonies." However, we must be honest and recognize that the evidence is overwhelming that men have tampered with the gift God has given His people. Further, we must relate to that evidence in an honest and intelligent manner. While some would rather not consider the possibility that God would allow any tampering to be done with the Spirit of Prophecy, Sister White herself states that even the Scriptures, in small amounts, have been tampered with!

*I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible, yet learned men, when the copies were few, had changed the words in some instances, thinking that they were making it more plain, when they were mystifying that which was plain, in causing it to lean to their established views, governed by tradition. But I saw that the word of God, as a whole, is a perfect chain, one portion of scripture explaining another. True seekers for truth need not err; for not only is the word of God plain and simple in declaring the way to life, but the Holy Spirit is given to guide in understanding the way of life revealed in his Word. (*Spiritual Gifts*, Volume 1, page 117 - See also *Early Writings*, pages 220, 221.)*

Sister White states she "saw" that while "God had especially guarded the Bible," there had been some changes made. Yet even with those changes, she "saw that the word of God, as a whole, is a perfect chain, one portion of scripture explaining another." One portion of Scripture most Bible scholars agree has been tampered with is 1 John 5:7, 8. These verses have material inserted which was not in the apostle's writing. We reproduce the text below with the inserted portion *italicized*.

*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. (1 John 5:7, 8)*

Without the interpolation the text reads: “For there are three that bear record, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.” Concerning these verses the *SDA Bible Commentary* states:

The passage as given in the KJV is in no Greek MS earlier than the 15th and 16th centuries. The disputed words found their way into the KJV by way of the Greek text of Erasmus (see Vol. V, p. 141). It is said that Erasmus offered to include the disputed words in his Greek Testament if he were shown even one Greek MS that contained them. A library in Dublin produced such a MS (known as 34), and Erasmus included the passage in his text. It is now believed that the later editions of the Vulgate acquired the passage by the mistake of a scribe who included an exegetical marginal comment in the Bible text that he was copying. The disputed words have been widely used in support of the doctrine of the Trinity, but, in view of such overwhelming evidence against their authenticity, their support is valueless and should not be used. (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 675.)<sup>11</sup>

God has protected the Scriptures as a whole and especially guarded those portions that are vital to our salvation. The same is true concerning the writings of Sister White. While her writings ring truer than Ivory soap is pure, no guarantee can be offered for materials that have been tampered with. Elder M. L. Andreasen, an ardent supporter of Sister White, was one of the first to try to alert the church to things that were happening in his day. Andreasen’s second letter in a series of six entitled, *Letters to the Churches*, was about the “Attempted Tampering” that he became aware of after obtaining a set of minutes from a meeting of the White Estate. Andreasen distinguished the following areas of attempted tampering: insertions of notes, explanations, and appendix notes, which some of the brethren wished to add. (See *Letters to the Churches*, No. 2.)

While the specific tamperings that Andreasen protested against were rejected, the brethren had been using compilations of Sister White’s writings for a long time in an attempt to shift the theology of the church. This has been done in two ways: First, writings are taken out of context, such as in certain compilations. Second, by the additions of chapter titles and sub-headings, the reader’s mind could be guided into areas not necessarily in the text. Examples of both methods are clearly seen in *Questions on Doctrine*. While we might rather remain quiet in the hope that God will take care of these problems, we must remember the old saying, “God has no hands but ours.” We have a duty to give the trumpet a certain sound when God’s inspired messages are being tampered with!<sup>12</sup>

## Editorial Changes

One type of editorial change that has been made is the use of capitalization to emphasize the concept of deity. The first example we will note is from *The Desire of Ages*.

Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the *Third Person* of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. (*Desire of Ages*, p. 671, 1940 edition)

The original edition copyrighted in 1898 reads:

Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the *third person* of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. (*Desire of Ages*, p. 671, 1898 edition)<sup>13</sup>

The capitalized edition makes it appear that Ellen White believed in a pro-Trinitarian position. Another example is seen in the following comparison:

Evil had been accumulating for centuries and could only be restrained and resisted by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, the *Third Person* of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 392)

Evil had been accumulating for centuries, and could only be restrained and resisted by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, the *third person* of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. (*Special Testimonies for Ministers and Workers*, Series A, #10, p. 25)

The footnote at the bottom of page 392 in *Testimonies to Ministers* reads: “The articles in this section are from *Special Testimonies to Ministers and Workers* (Series A, Nos. 9-11, 1897-1898). This article is from No. 10, pp. 25-33.” Every time that the phrase “third person of the Godhead” was published under the pen of Ellen G. White while she was alive, the expression “third person” was always in the lower case! Since her death it has been reprinted at least six times in the upper case.<sup>14</sup>

One reference to the “third person” that was correctly republished in the lower case is found in the *S. D. A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1052, 1053. This statement calls the divine Spirit “that converting, enlightening and sanctifying power.”

Christ determined that when he ascended from this earth, he would bestow a gift on those who had believed on him, and those who should believe on him. What gift could he bestow rich enough to signalize and grace his ascension to the mediatorial throne? It must be worthy of his greatness and his royalty. He determined to give his representative, the third person of the Godhead. This gift could not be excelled. He would give all gifts in one, and therefore the divine Spirit, that converting, enlightening and sanctifying power, would be his donation. (Original source: *Southern Watchman*, November 28, 1905)

The August 1994 issue of *Voice of Reformation* published what was supposed to be a copy of the original handwritten Ellen G. White statement: “There are three living persons of the heavenly trio.” (*Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 7, p 63)<sup>15</sup> The main point of interest was the supposed change made from the original “personalities” to “persons.” The exhibit in *Voice of Reformation* shows that at first Sister White wrote “persons,” but then struck out the “s” and included “alities” to make the word “personalities.” While not doubting the sincerity of the publisher, I wished to verify the authenticity of the exhibit. Therefore, I called an official of the White Estate that I believed to be honest and trustworthy and asked if the published manuscript was a copy of an authentic EGW manuscript. The official suggested that it was most likely correct. Upon my request, this brother sent me a copy made directly from the original manuscript so I could compare the two. While the copy I received from the White Estate was much clearer than the copy published in *Voice of Reformation*, the two were identical. The original copy with Sister White’s corrections reads as follows:

“There are <sup>the</sup> living three persons <sup>alities</sup> of the heavenly trio in which every soul repenting of their sins ~~believing~~ receiving Christ by a living faith to them who are baptized.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Photocopy of Original Ellen G. White Manuscript**



Epiphany, S. 7 III. 1916

The Father is not to be described by the creature  
The Father is all the fullness of the God head  
invisible to mortal earthly sight

The Son is all the fullness of the God head  
revealed & manifested, He is the express image of his  
Father's <sup>image</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>himself</sup>  
God so loved the world that he gave  
his only begotten Son that whosoever  
believeth in him should not perish but have  
everlasting life. He is the personal ity of the Father.

The Spirit the Comforter whom Christ  
promised to send after he ascended to heaven  
is Christ is the Spirit in all the fullness  
of the God head manifest to the  
All who receive him and believe in him  
shall be <sup>the</sup> living <sup>with</sup> three persons of the <sup>unity</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>God</sup> <sup>head</sup>  
in which every soul repenting of their  
sins believing receiving Christ by a living  
faith with them who are baptized in the name  
of Jesus Christ to them in the name of the  
Father and of the Son and of the Holy

Spirit three high dignified personalities  
X Give power <sup>to the children of the world</sup> because they are God's property  
who are called the Sons of God, what is the sin  
to do, believe in Jesus Christ because they  
are his property which he hath purchased  
with his own blood through the Cross and his  
sacrifice he has subjected to redeem us from all unrighteousness

This is one of the chief "proof texts" Adventists use today to prove Trinitarianism. However, a study of Sister White's writings reveals that she did not use the terms "being" and "person" interchangeably as

some do today. She stated that Christ was “the *only being* that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34) This denotes only two “beings.” If the Holy Spirit was a “being” in the same sense as Christ, then why was the Holy Spirit not able to enter into all the “counsels and purposes of God”? Further, there is a distinction that can be made between “person” and “personality” and the manner in which “personality” can be defined. In a letter dated January 24, 1935, Elder H. W. Carr wrote to W. C. White requesting Willie’s understanding of his “mother’s position in reference to the personality of the Holy Spirit.” Elder White responded in part:

This I cannot do because I never clearly understood her teachings on the matter. There always was in my mind some perplexity regarding the meaning of her utterances which to my superficial manner of thinking seemed to be somewhat confusing. ...

My perplexities were lessened a little when I learned from the dictionary that one of the meanings of personality, was characteristics. It is stated in such a way that I concluded that there might be personality without bodily form which is possessed by the Father and the Son. (Letter of W. C. White to H. W. Carr, April 30, 1935)

*The Published Ellen G. White Writings*, ver. 2.0 (CD-ROM) show ten different statements published in nineteen different places for the word “personalities.” Three of these statements refer to the Godhead. All three statements include only God and Christ. They are:

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us.” These words present God and Christ as two distinct personalities. (*Notebook Leaflets*, p. 124)

On Sabbath, April 27, many of our brethren and sisters from neighboring churches gathered in the parlors with the sanitarium family, and I spoke to them there. I read the first chapter of Hebrews as the basis of my discourse. This chapter clearly indicates the individual personalities of the Father and the Son. (*R&H*, Aug. 1, 1907)

On Sabbath, April 27, many of our brethren and sisters from neighboring churches gathered in the parlors with the sanitarium family, and I spoke to them there. I read the first chapter of Hebrews as the basis of my discourse. This chapter clearly indicates the individual personalities of the Father and the Son. (*R&H*, Aug. 1, 1907)

In this Scripture [John 1:1-4, 14-16: 3:34-36] God and Christ are spoken of as two distinct personalities, each acting in their own individuality. (*MR* 760, p. 18)

In *Special Testimonies*, Sister White uses the term “personality” in a way that could not be interchanged with “person.” Concerning God and Christ she wrote:

The Son is all the fulness of the Godhead manifested. The Word of God declares Him to be “the express image of His person.” “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Here is shown the personality of the Father. (*Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 7, p. 63)

Our thinking is further expanded with the following statement from *The Desire of Ages*:

The Holy Spirit is Christ’s representative, but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally. Therefore it was for their interest that He should go to the Father, and send the Spirit to be His successor on earth. No one could then have any advantage because of his location or his personal contact with Christ. By the Spirit the Saviour would be accessible to all. In this sense He would be nearer to them than if He had not ascended on high. (*Desire of Ages*, p. 669)

Here the Holy Spirit is mentioned as not having the “personality of humanity” as does Christ, but Sister White also wrote: “The Holy Spirit has a personality, else He could not bear witness to our

spirits and with our spirits that we are the children of God. He must also be a divine person, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God.” (Manuscript 20, 1906 — *Evangelism*, p. 617)

In addition to these statements, we also find Sister White referred to the Holy Spirit as “it,” something she never did in reference to God or Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, in Christ’s name. He personifies Christ, yet is a distinct personality. We may have the Holy Spirit if we ask for *it* and make it [a] habit to turn to and trust in God rather than in any finite human agent who may make mistakes. (*Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 20, p. 324)

## An Altered Quotation

The following is from a letter written to Elder S. N. Haskell, dated May 30, 1896. This reference from the *1888 Materials* has been directly altered by removing the term “it” for the Spirit and replacing it with “Him” and “He.” First, notice the altered statement followed by the original:

The Spirit is freely given us of God if we will appreciate and accept *Him*. And what is *He*?—the representative of Jesus Christ. *He* is to be our constant helper. It is through the Spirit that Christ fulfills the promise, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47). (The bell is sounding for morning worship. I must stop here.)—Letter 38, 1896, pp. 1-4. (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 11, p. 35 - Letter to S. N. Haskell, May 30, 1896.)

The Spirit is freely given us of God if we will appreciate and accept *it* And what is *it*? The representative of Jesus Christ. *It* is to be our constant helper. It is through the Spirit that Christ fulfills the promise, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life”. (The bell is sounding for morning worship, I must stop here). (*The 1888 Materials*, p. 1538)

The original letter to Haskell has at least fourteen references to the Spirit as “it.” Here are some more:

The church members need to know from experience what the Holy Spirit will do for them. *It* will bless the receiver, and make him a blessing. It is sad that every soul is not praying for the vital breath of the Spirit, for we are ready to die if *it* breathe not on us.

We are to pray for the impartation of the Spirit as the remedy for sin-sick souls. The church needs to be converted, and why should we not prostrate ourselves at the throne of grace, as representatives of the church, and from a broken heart and contrite spirit make earnest supplication that the Holy Spirit shall be poured out upon us from on high? Let us pray that when *it* shall be graciously bestowed, our cold hearts may be revived, and we may have discernment to understand that *it* is from God, and receive *it* with joy. Some have treated the Spirit as an unwelcome guest, refusing to receive the rich gift, refusing to acknowledge *it*, turning from *it*, and condemning *it* as fanaticism. When the Holy Spirit works the human agent, *it* does not ask us in what way *it* shall operate. Often *it* moves in unexpected ways. Christ did not come as the Jews expected. He did not come in a manner to glorify them as a nation. His forerunner came to prepare the way for him by calling upon the people to repent of their sins and be converted, and be baptized. Christ’s message was, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent ye and believe the gospel.” The Jews refused to receive Christ, because he did not come in accordance with their expectations. (*Ibid.*, p. 1540)

No excuse or valid reason can be given for altering the work of Sister White in such a manner. If we are going to publish a paraphrase, then we should state it to be such. There is no precedent in the Scriptures for such a direct change. While men in editorial positions may be working with an honest heart seeking to present the material as clearly as possible, it certainly opens one’s mind to the concept of a conspiracy to alter the theology of God’s people.

# A Proposed Solution

Elder George Butler, in an article entitled “The Vision,” gave a balanced approach to the relationship of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy writings, and truth. He wrote:

The majority of our people believe these visions to be a genuine manifestation of spiritual gifts, and as such to be entitled to respect. We do not hold them to be superior to the Bible, or in one sense equal to it. The Scriptures are our rule to test everything by, the visions as well as other things. That rule, therefore, is of the highest authority; the standard is higher than the thing tested by it. If the Bible would show the visions were not in harmony with it, the Bible would stand, and the visions would be given up. (*The Review & Herald*, August 14, 1883)

Elder Butler expresses the true historic Adventist position, that of the pioneers. Elder William Grotheer has commented insightfully on Butler’s statement:

Butler stated - “The Scriptures are our rule to test everything by, the visions as well as other things.” Accepting this guideline - and there really is none other to accept - all one needs to do is to check whatever reference from the Writings which he might wish to use, by the Bible. If it harmonizes, whether it has been borrowed from some other source, or composed by one of the literary assistants, it speaks truth. Use it! There will be some quotes for which there is no Biblical verification, neither will there be any Biblical data contrary to the ideas expressed. If one wishes to follow the counsel expressed under such conditions, he is at liberty to do so, but let such a one manifest Christian forbearance in harmony with Paul’s counsel toward any who might be so inclined. Those who wish not to follow any particular counsel not specifically affirmed by the Bible, but spelled out in the Writings, should be sure they are not condemned by the things which they allow. (*Bible Study Guide*, pp. 78, 79)

While there are some areas of difficulty, a study of all the writings, allowing the “weight of evidence” to play its proper role, will allow the honest student to arrive at truth just as the study of the Scriptures “as a whole, is a perfect chain” of truth. Continued study will help solve some of the *apparent inconsistencies* between these statements that seem to teach different concepts. First, let us notice the channel of communication between God and man.

Without the atonement of the Son of God there could have been no communication of blessing or salvation from God to man. God was jealous for the honor of his law. The transgression of that law had caused a fearful separation between God and man. To Adam in his innocence was granted communion, direct, free, and happy, with his Maker. *After his transgression, God would communicate to man only through Christ and angels.* (*Signs of the Times*, Jan. 30, 1879)

The Holy Spirit is totally left out here. Only Christ and the angels are mentioned as channels of communication. Then who is the Holy Spirit?

Christ declared that after his ascension, he would send to his church, as his crowning gift, the Comforter, who was to take his place. This Comforter is the Holy Spirit,—the soul of his life, the efficacy of his church, the light and life of the world. With his Spirit Christ sends a reconciling influence and a power that takes away sin. (*Review & Herald*, May 19, 1904)

This concept parallels Acts 20:28 where the Holy Ghost is described as having purchased the church of God “with his own blood.” These concepts open the study further, driving us into the Scriptures as the “lesser light” was designed to do. The next chapter will continue this study from a Biblical perspective. However, there will continue to be Spirit of Prophecy statements and concepts introduced for enlightenment and further consideration.

## Footnotes

1. "A Response to Two Explanations of W. W. Prescott's 1915 Letter" - A Paper by Gilbert M. Valentine, June 1981, Andrews University.
2. Examples could be cited such as the close parallels between *Sketches From the Life of Paul* with *The Life and Epistles of Saint Paul* by Conybeare and Howson; *The Desire of Ages* and *The Life of Christ* by William Hanna and *The Great Teacher* by John Harris; and several of Sister White's testimonies on health with Larkin B. Coles book, *Philosophy of Health*.
3. Valentine *op. cit.* Those books were *Christian Education* published in 1893, (later entitled *Education*) and *Special Testimonies on Education* published in 1897 (later used as the basis for *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*). See also pages 167 and 168 of Valentine's manuscript.
4. Concerning the problems of plagiarism with *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, Amadon stated: "It is the opinion of the writer that Mrs White was not aware that the language of another author was being used in her book without the customary quotation marks; and that the fact that no acknowledgment was made in the preface must be laid at the door of her publishers. Mrs White does not write the prefaces to her books, she is not a proof reader, and much of the work on her numerous volumes is done by literary helpers." - *Battle Creek Journal*, May 27, 1907.
5. *Review & Herald*, Nov. 27, 1883
6. Examples such as Aaron's sons (Leviticus 10:1, 2); Samuel's sons (1 Samuel 8:1-5); David's sons (2 Samuel 13-15, 1 Kings 1); etc.
7. See *The Later Elmshaven Years* 1905-1915, p. 61.
8. See *The Early Elmshaven Years*, p. 46.
9. See Letter of W. S. Sadler to E. G. White, April 26, 1906.
10. "Every Christian is therefore in duty bound to take the Bible as a perfect rule of faith and duty. He should pray fervently to be aided by the Holy Spirit in searching the Scriptures for the whole truth, and for his whole duty. He is not at liberty to turn from them to learn his duty through any of the gifts. We say that the very moment he does, he places the gifts in a wrong place, and takes an extremely dangerous position. The Word should be in front, and the eye of the church should be placed upon it, as the rule to walk by, and the fountain of wisdom, from which to learn duty in 'all good works.'" (The Gifts of the Gospel Church, James White - *Review and Herald*, April 21, 1851)
11. Also see George Reid's article in the *Adventist Review*, August 25, 1983, p. 12.
12. See Isaiah 58:1 and Ezekiel 9:4.
13. See Appendix page 214 for copy of original.

14. See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671, 1940 edition; *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 194; *Lift Him Up*, p. 191; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 392; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 2, p. 34; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 4, p. 329.

15. Also published in *Evangelism*, page 615.

16. See the Appendix for a line by line translation of the manuscript.

## Appendix

The Father is not to be described by the earthly  
The Father is all the fullness of the God head  
invisible to mortal earthly sight.

The Son is all the fullness of the God head  
revealed manifested, He is the express image of his  
Fathers person For God so loved the world that he gave  
his only begotten Son that whosoever  
believeth in him should not perish but have  
everlasting life. Here is the personality of the Father.

The Spirit the Comforter whom Christ  
promised to send and he ascended to heaven  
is Christ is the Spirit in all the fullness  
of the God head making manifest to the  
All who receive him and believe in Him  
There are the living three persons alities of the heavenly  
trio in which every Soul repenting of their  
sins believing receiving Christ by a living  
faith to them who are baptized in the name  
of Jesus Christ to them In the name of the  
Father and of the Son and of the Holy  
Ghost these high dignified personalities  
Give power because they are Gods property  
to be called the Sons of God, What is the sinner  
to do, believe in Jesus Christ because they  
are his property which he hath purchased  
with his own blood through the test and trial  
to which he was subjected to redeem from the slavery

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As can be seen, Sister White's Handwriting was at times very difficult to read. The interlinear type translation above was made primarily from the original manuscript. Words that at first were not clear were compared with the typewritten manuscript from Ellen White's file copy of 1906.