

Volume 1, Number 6

Veltman's Verdict
Awaited

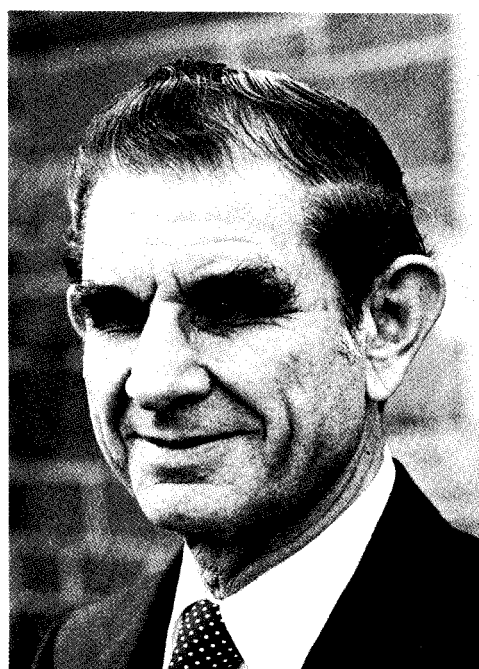
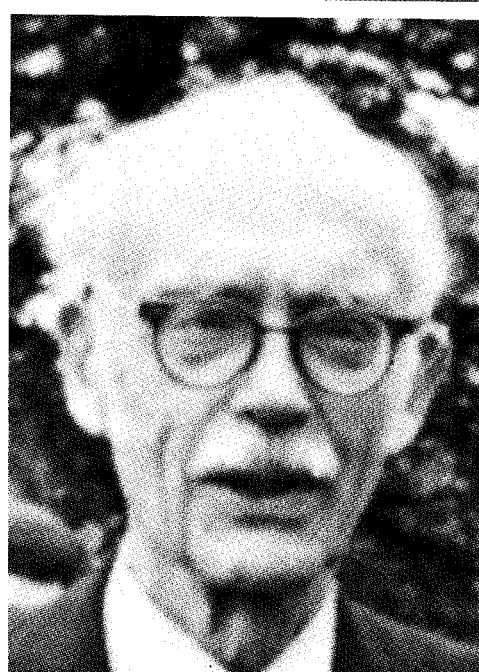
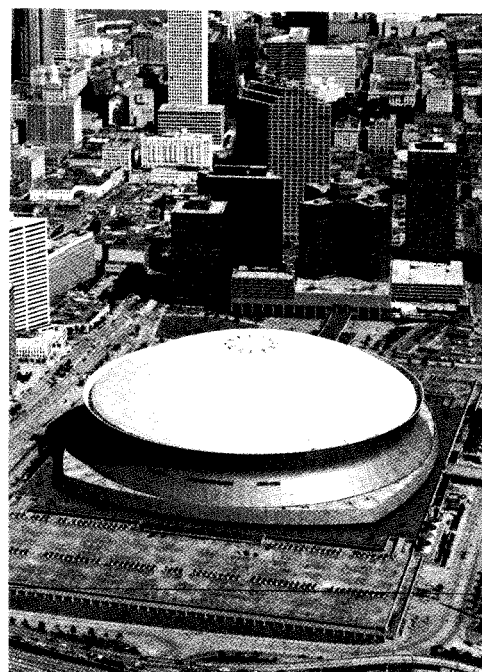
"They shall die
the death"

Wilson in
Midstream

Ellen White's
Head Injury

Fencing with
Walter Martin

The Fright of
Martin Gardner



AN UNAUTHORIZED FREE PRESS SUPPLEMENT TO OFFICIAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PUBLICATIONS

adventist currents

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FROM THE PUBLISHER:

The publisher and editorial staff of *Adventist Currents* are committed to the belief that Christian freedom is enhanced by information that makes judicious choice a possibility.

Adventist Currents represents an effort to put before Seventh-day Adventists, in a careful, creative, and lively way, information and ideas not usually discussed in official, denominational publications.

Readers should find *Adventist Currents* stimulating and accurate at all times, even when they disagree with its editorial posture. Also, it must not be assumed that the publisher of *Adventist Currents* subscribes to the opinions of its contributors.

It is expected that readers will understand the humor sprinkled throughout the magazine as a useful relief to the curse of protracted seriousness. Amen.

CURRENT CURRENTS

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CURRENTS NEEDS

PEOPLE

Adventist Currents needs people in a variety of geographical locations who will report to the magazine local matters that are of interest to the general readership.

Particularly needed are individuals in or around church administrative offices who can help *Currents* to better understand the minds and actions of conference, union, and General Conference officers.

Also needed are reporters from Seventh-day Adventist college campuses — continuing sources of information and news.

Friends of *Currents* who can assist in its distribution and/or the acquiring of mailing lists are essential.

INFORMATION

Adventist Currents welcomes carefully written articles about Adventism's past, present, and future — articles about issues, events or individuals (maximum length, 5,500 words).

Currents needs brief, specific, and documented news items that provide information that is generally not available through the "General Organ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (maximum length, 1,800 words).

Guest editorials are welcome, so long as they do not address the characters of individuals or employ language that is untoward (maximum length, 1,200).

Letters to the editor are encouraged. Those that are not published will be polled.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Adventist Currents needs contributions to promote the growth in size, quality, and readership of the magazine.

Currents needs friends with stamina who will send tax-free contributions on a regular basis — what is elsewhere termed "systematic benevolence."

Adventist Currents' publisher, Mars Hill Publications, Inc., intends to publish books that address various issues of interest to *Currents'* subscribers. Suggestions for topics and potential authors are welcome.

by Douglas Hackleman

Harold Marshall Sylvester Richards was probably the most widely respected Seventh-day Adventist in the world, and certainly the most affectionately regarded Adventist minister.

He seemed to possess an almost metaphysical quality that could elicit even from jaded Adventist audiences a throat-catching sense of anticipation.

A combination of mental and speaking gifts, added to his wide reading habits, made Richards' radio and personal ministries especially effective.

Another reason for the Adventist membership's respect for Richards stemmed from the fact that although they understood him to be a loyal Adventist, they also recognized that he was not a company man. H.M.S. never stopped regretting putting his "voice" under the control of "the wise men on Eastern Avenue" — a mistake he admired his friend J.L. (Quiet Hour) Tucker for not making.

Richards viewed the 1978 forced march of the Voice of Prophecy from Glendale, California, to the Adventist Media Center in Thousand Oaks, California, as a loathsome thing. The Voice owed nothing on its very adequate headquarters in Glendale. And the city was replete with retired Adventists who found meaning and community in volunteering a variety of services to the Voice and its mission. At Thousand Oaks the rent was steep; and the hour-plus trip from Glendale discouraged most of the retired volunteers.

The decision to conglomerate the Voice, Faith for Today, It Is Written, and later The Breath of Life at one location was made at a General Conference autumn council, following vigorous debate. When the discussion was concluded, Richards was asked to pronounce the benediction. Those in attendance say he stood to his feet and said firmly, "No. I will not benedict something I believe to be wrong."

Whereas the General Conference lives by committee, H.M.S. hated committees. Born a half century too late, he was a frustrated, would-be Civil War general. By the end of a long session in committee, Richards sometimes would have sketched out several pages of battle plans for various confrontations between the Blue and the Gray.

Another reason Richards would not have been comfortable as a General Conference man was his nonsectarian nature. He mingled comfortably and continuously — to their mutual enrichment — with non-Adventist Christians. The religious xenophobia of many fellow Adventists vexed him. Writing to me in 1977, he spent a page discussing a variety of authors we both had read or were reading and then interrupted his discussion of books to mention an honor that had come to him a few weeks earlier.

He and his wife were attending meetings of the manifestly ecumenical National Religious

Broadcasters' Association in Washington, D.C. The keynote speaker, Dr. Hoffman of The Lutheran Hour, was about ten minutes into his address when he spotted Elder Richards sitting a few rows from the front. Hoffman stopped midspeech to have Richards stand and accept an ovation. "Oh, how I wish," Richards concluded the story, "that our people would be loving, kind, wise, Christian, and ready to receive and reciprocate to these men."

A few years ago I became aware that in 1948 the Southern Publishing Association had printed Richards' "newly revised and condensed" version of a book (*Night Scenes from the Bible*) written by one of the nineteenth-century authors to whom Ellen White owed considerable credit, Daniel March. I mentioned this to Richards following an Association of Adventist Forums chapter meeting in 1980 or 1981. He smiled and said yes it had been thirty years anyway. Then, alluding to the then-recent revelations concerning Mrs. White's use of sources, I remarked that he must have held in his heart all these years what some of us had just begun to realize. Richards chuckled and said that he knew a lot more about her source dependence now than he had known then.

That was the last chat I ever had with H.M.S. In 1982 the first of the strokes that assaulted him forced his retirement to Ventura Estates — there like another general, another "chief," to fade away. And although his death was not unexpected, it is nevertheless wrenching to those who drew strength merely from the knowledge that such a blythe and unfettered spirit lived among us as a reminder of what is good in Adventism.

And it is not at all clear that Adventism can produce another man of Richards' mold. Such men issue from churches in whose veins courage runs. Perhaps that is why at the memorial service in Loma Linda, Pacific Union Conference president Walter Blehm spoke of "the end of an era" in Adventism that died with the man.

H.M.S. Richards loved poetry and was a poet himself. A few lines here from one of his favorites ("The Burial of Moses," by Cecil Frances Alexander) seems appropriate:

By Nebo's lonely mountain,
On this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab
There lies a lonely grave;
And no man knows that sepulcher,
And no man saw it e'er;
For the angels of God upturn'd the sod
And laid the dead man there.
That was the grandest funeral
That ever pass'd on earth;
But no man heard the trampling,
Or saw the train go forth . . .

So without sound of music,
Or voice of them that wept,

Silently down from the mountain's crown
The great procession swept.

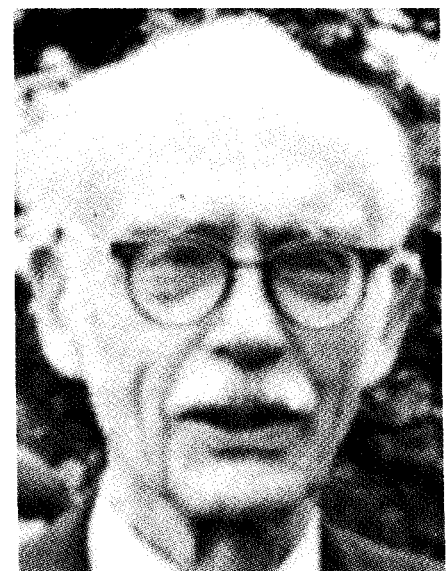
Perchance the bald old eagle
On gray Beth-peor's height,
Out of his lonely eyrie
Look'd on the wondrous sight;
Perchance the lion stalking,
Still shuns that hallowed spot . . .

And had he not high honor? —
The hillside for a pall!
To lie in state, while angels wait,
With stars for tapers tall,
And the dark rock-pines like tossing plumes,
Over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand, in that lonely land,
To lay him in the grave! —

In that strange grave without a name,
Whence his uncoffin'd clay
Shall break again — O wondrous thought! —
Before the judgment day,
And stand, with glory wrapped around,
On the hills he never trod,
And speak of the strife that won our life
With the incarnate Son of God . . .

God hath His mysteries of grace,
Ways that we cannot tell,
He hides them deep, like the hidden sleep
Of him He loved so well.

I believe that Richards would have preferred — like Moses — simply to have taken one last walk in the hills of Beth-peor. Montecito Memorial Park is not exactly Mount Nebo; but our conditionalist faith teaches us that he will rest there in peace until his ears are quickened by the call of a voice he will recognize: "H.M.S. Richards, come forth!"



H. M. S. Richards, Sr.

Courtesy David S. Baker Portfolio

Lynching aftermath

The "lynching at Orlando Central" story and related material that appeared in the past issue of *Adventist Currents* elicited more mail than any topic so far addressed in the journal. Some of that mail is published in this issue's Currently Posted section.

A number of letter writers have wanted to know why the lynching's presiding pastor's side of the story had not been told. It is a fair question.

Currents telephoned Kenneth Coonley a few weeks before writing the "Lynching" story to ask him some questions, appeal for some missing facts, and get his reaction to several documents. Coonley said he did not know anything about *Currents*, and that the Orlando Central Church's affairs did not concern Californians or anyone outside the Florida Conference.

When *Currents* pointed out that it would be difficult to represent Coonley's perspective on the now infamous Saturday night business meeting if he would not answer any questions, he said, "I answered your question." *Currents* replied that somehow it had missed the answer.

Coonley responded: "I said it was none of your business. Isn't that an answer? ISN'T THAT AN ANSWER? ISN'T THAT AN ANSWER?"

Since the lynching, disfellowshipped and now former Orlando Central head elder Robert Cushman has appealed three times (24 September 1984, 11 February 1985, 29 April 1985) to the Florida Conference Executive Committee for an impartial inquiry. The only response Cushman has received was a letter from the new Florida Conference president, Malcolm Gordon, suggesting Cushman work the problems out with Ken Coonley.

Paragraphs from a letter (29 April 1985) Cushman wrote to Coonley illustrate some of the hurdles that would have to be negotiated to work out the problem with Coonley:

"Why did you, at a workers' meeting a few weeks prior to September 8 [1984], boast to a number that you intended to deal with the Wilson-Cushman problem and their membership?"

"Why did you state that unless the church dealt with this problem, your resignation as pastor would be on Elder Carubba's desk the following morning?"

"Why did you visit church members and ask them to be sure to be at the business meeting and to support you and your position rather than encouraging them to vote their conscience?"

"Ken, why did you not follow biblical and *Church Manual* counsel and visit and work with those you felt were in error? Why did you lie to the church on September 8, and tell them that you had done so when Frank Palmour asked had you done so? Why did you not bring the problem first to the church board or board of elders for review and counsel?..."

"Why have you told church members that you have been to visit Betsy and me and that we would not let you in the house? You know that is a falsehood. You have not darkened our door since September 8."

Coonley did tell *Currents* in the abortive phone call mentioned above that he and ex-pastor Phillip Wilson were friends and that he, Coonley, would be taking Wilson to lunch in a few days. Coonley never has invited Wilson to lunch or any other meal, even though the two men subsequently stood together at the same hospital bedside for approximately twenty minutes.

Eight months have elapsed since Coonley told the Orlando Central Church Board that he would have a professional parliamentarian determine from the tapes whether the 8 September 1984 business meeting was procedurally sound; and that if it was determined that the amended motions of the meeting were improperly made, he would advise the disfellowshipped members of their right to a hearing. No such right has been communicated to any of the disfellowshipped, although it has been determined clearly that parliamentary procedure was repeatedly abused.

Because some Orlando Central members are now denying that *Currents* quoted their business remarks correctly, the editor is delighted to announce that the three tapes of the entire business meeting may be acquired from Gospel Seminars, P.O. Box 471, Lake Mary, Florida 32746. A donation of \$8.00 for the three cassettes is suggested.

Daniel Committee judges Hebrews

Four-and-a-half years after *Glacier View*, the re-established Daniel and Revelation Committee has completed its study and analysis of the book of Hebrews.

Since Hebrews is one of four biblical books (along with Leviticus, Daniel, and Revelation) on which the sanctuary teaching traditionally has been based, the ostensible task of the committee was to ascertain whether the sanctuary doctrine as taught by Adventist pioneers finds support in that New Testament book.

The committee's evaluation of Hebrews and its impact on sanctuary theology were summarized in four pages of the 7 February 1985 *Adventist Review*. Although the summary is introduced by Biblical Research associate secretary Frank Holbrook, the unspecified author of the article is probably *Review* editor William Johnsson, whose doctoral dissertation focused on the book of Hebrews. Johnsson also was instrumental in drafting the *Glacier View* consensus statement. But, being uncertain, *Currents* will overview the summary of the committee's work referring to "the author of the summary,"

just as Seventh-day Adventist scholars refer cautiously to "the author of Hebrews."

The author of the summary was careful, as Frank Holbrook was in his introductory statement, not to mention Desmond Ford, *Glacier View*, or the fact that the Daniel and Revelation Committee's work was "inspired" either by the man, the event, or his *Glacier View* opus.

TA HAGIA

The writer of the summary reports that "the [Daniel and Revelation] committee believes that *ta hagia* . . . should be translated in most instances as 'sanctuary' unless the context clearly indicates otherwise (such as in chap. 9: 2, 3)."

Desmond Ford argued that in texts crucial to the traditional sanctuary exposition, "*ta hagia* refers to the innermost sanctuary — the second apartment . . ."

In context, Daniel 9 is a contrasting of the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Christ. Ford and other scholars argue convincingly that verses seven (" . . . but into the second [apartment] only the high priest goes, and he but once a year . . .") and twenty-five ("Nor . . . [did Christ] offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own . . .") require a second apartment interpretation for *ta hagia* because they clearly refer to the Day of Atonement.

"WITHIN THE VEIL"

The summary writer leaves readers with the impression that the Daniel and Revelation Committee was unable to agree whether "within the veil" (Hebrews 6: 19, 20) refers to the first veil or second veil. The *Review* writer indicates that "Ellen White has applied the veil imagery of [Hebrews] 6: 19, 20 to both apartments (cf. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 420, 421, first apartment; *Present Truth* [March 1850], p. 64 [*Review and Herald* reprints, p. 11], second apartment)" — an assertion that was unappreciated when made earlier by Ford.

According to the summary author, "The expression 'within the veil' is probably . . . being used in a figurative manner to denote access to God." This is consistent with the Daniel and Revelation Committee's belief that in Hebrews the writer is "comparing and contrasting in broad strokes the Levitical sanctuary sacrifices and priestly ministry with Christ's efficacious sacrifice and heavenly priesthood" [emphasis added].

The *Review* summary writer continues in his own italics, "*there is no attempt to give an exposition of the typical significance of the two-apartment phases of priestly ministry.*"

This should come as a relief to those Adventists who were frightened by the implications of a strict adherence to type/antitype in which Azazel (Satan) becomes the final sinner. But it also is encouraging to those who have argued that the book of Hebrews does not support the traditional Adventist sanctuary position.

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Desmond Ford and the Daniel and Revelation Committee could recite in unison what the summary writer attributes to the committee — that the writer of Hebrews is contrasting the Levitical priesthood with what Christians have “in their exalted Lord . . . a better sacrifice/blood and a better priest, who mediates for them in a better sanctuary in connection with a better covenant.”

Several column inches are devoted by the *Review* summary author to arguing that “the Day of Atonement type — in terms of the final judgment — was not fulfilled at the cross.” This is not — if it was intended to appear so — inconsistent with Ford’s notion of “inaugurated and realized” eschatology.

Although it is not explicitly stated, readers may deduce from the *Review* report that the Daniel and Revelation committee did not find in Hebrews support for a first- and second-apartment heavenly ministry of Christ separated by 1,800 years. The question may be raised and pondered whether the heuristic dividends produced by the theologians on the committee will offset the personal tragedies that administrators set in motion on the Friday evening of 15 August 1980.

Ellen White and Halley’s Comet

The relationship between Halley’s Comet and Ellen White will interest only those who remain curious about the latter’s use of sources.

This prophet/comet relationship is brought to mind by news notices of the impending return of a comet named for the seventeenth-century English astronomer Edmund Halley (1656-1742), who in 1682 calculated its seventy-six-year periodicity and accurately predicted the year of its return.

The “Destruction of Jerusalem” chapter in the 1884 edition of Ellen White’s *The Great Controversy* describes “signs and wonders” that appeared in Judea as the destruction of the city drew near — including “a comet, resembling a flaming sword, [that] for a year hung over the city” (p. 31).

Astronomers calculate that Halley’s Comet would have been visible over Jerusalem for some months in A.D. 66, three years before Jerusalem’s fall.

That a little lady with no special knowledge of astronomy could write such a statement in 1884 might confirm for some Adventists Mrs. White’s publisher’s preface assertion “that the writer has received the illumination of the Holy Spirit in preparing these pages . . .”

When *The Great Controversy* was expanded and republished in 1888, the sentence about the comet was gone. By 1911, when the book was slightly revised and reprinted, the comet sentence had not returned. But the paragraph containing other signs and wonders remained (pp. 29, 30) and now referenced Milman’s “History of the Jews,” book 13.

Perhaps future editions of Ellen White’s favorite book could credit the first-century Jewish general/historian Josephus — the earliest possible source for her “signs and wonders” paragraph and the paragraph following.

For comet watchers and literary sleuths, *Currents* has printed below, in parallel columns,

Josephus A.D. 80 (approx.)

The War of the Jews

[The Jews] did not attend . . . to the signs that . . . did so plainly foretell their future desolation. . . . Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year . . .

At the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day-time; . . .

Before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armour were seen running about among the clouds . . .

Priests . . . heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, “Let us remove hence.”

Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner, [court of the temple,] which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men . . . and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor . . . was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night.

There was one . . . who began on a sudden to cry aloud, “A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!” . . . he was whipped till his bones were laid bare; yet did he not make any supplication for himself, nor shed any tears, but . . . at every stroke of the whip his answer was, “Woe, woe to Jerusalem!” . . . he continued this ditty for seven years and five months . . . until the very time that he saw his presage in earnest fulfilled in our siege, when . . . there came a stone out of one of the [enemy’s] engines, and smote him, and killed him immediately.

sentences from Josephus’ *Wars of the Jews*, book VI, pp. 582, 583 (as translated by William Whiston and published in paperback by Kregel Publications), with two paragraphs from Ellen White’s *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. IV, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 31, 32 (published by Pacific Press in 1884).

Ellen White A.D. 1884

The Great Controversy

Signs and wonders appeared, foreboding disaster and doom.

A comet, resembling a flaming sword, for a year hung over the city.

An unnatural light was seen hovering over the temple.

Upon the clouds were pictured chariots mustering for battle.

Mysterious voices in the temple court uttered the warning words, “Let us depart hence.”

The eastern gate of the inner court, which was of brass, and so heavy that it was with difficulty shut by a score of men, and having bolts fastened deep into the firm pavement, was seen at midnight to be opened of its own accord.

For seven years a man continued to go up and down the streets of Jerusalem, declaring the woes that were to come upon the city. By day and by night he chanted the wild dirge, “A voice from the east; a voice from the west; a voice from the four winds; a voice against Jerusalem and the temple; a voice against the bridegroom and the bride; and a voice against all the people.” This strange being was imprisoned and scourged; but no complaint escaped his lips. To insult and abuse he answered only, “Woe to Jerusalem! woe, woe to the inhabitants thereof!” His warning cry ceased not until he was slain in the siege he had foretold.

“These girls . . . have to wait”

John Dart, *Los Angeles Times* religion writer, quoted General Conference vice president Lowell Bock on 6 April 1985 as saying, “Unfortunately we have a situation where these girls who were called to the ministry have to wait.”

It is interesting to note that there are General Conference leaders (Bock is not lonely in this) who believe that women are in fact “called” to the ministry and feel it “unfortunate” that they will have to wait to fully live out their calling.

Bock’s poor use of the word “girls,” however, illustrates the enculturated prejudices that cling

more tenaciously to others and that explain to a great degree why there is an issue at all. Would the women pastors of the Potomac Conference speak to the *Times* interviewer of the “boys” on the General Conference Committee?

Last year it was the overwhelming decision of the Potomac Conference Executive Committee to sanction its women pastors to baptize candidates for church membership. This led to a 16 August 1984 confrontation between leaders of the Potomac Conference and the General Conference. At this five-hour meeting an informal compromise was negotiated. Potomac

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Conference would table its vote to license women pastors and the General Conference would bring the issue before the church at large for a definitive decision.

But no one really wanted to hold the hot potato for very long; so it was handed around. At Annual Council (October 1984) yet another committee was appointed (sixty-six members) to discuss the issue from March 26-28, 1985, and make recommendations to the General Conference to be voted up or down at the New Orleans quinquennium.

Currents' account of what took place at that three-day deliberation is based on an eyewitness report prepared by Andrews University periodicals librarian, Kit Watts — one of the sixty-six-member commission's fifteen women participants. (Watts' full report will be published in a forthcoming issue of *Adventist Woman*.)

At the outset, Neal Wilson, who chaired the commission himself, apologized for the unrepresentativeness of its makeup (forty-one North American members and twenty-five from the nine world divisions.) This would be corrected at New Orleans, he said, where the decision would be made; and only twenty percent of the 2,240 delegates would be from North America.

Wilson also made it clear from the beginning that a clear two-thirds majority would be required to assume a consensus from the commission.

When the group assembled initially in the Keystone Room of the Takoma Park Church, preparation for the commission's work seemed curiously lacking: no seating assignments had been made, no agenda had been mailed out, and no procedures had been established.

With time a precious commodity, Wilson asked the division presidents to introduce the members of their delegation. That took an hour. Then the recent past-president of Loma Linda University, Nerskov Olsen, presented a one-hour-and-forty-minute "devotional," listing and elaborating upon six "control factors" that he believed should guide the commission.

Of these Olsen spent nearly half an hour on his sixth guideline — decrying the ordination of women in other churches and noting empathetically the concern of Anglicans who believe that "the ordination of women has brought ecumenism to the point of acute crisis." *Currents* was surprised to hear Olsen's example. As a theologian he should recognize the radical difference between Adventist and Anglican theologies of ordination that render his analogy meaningless.

Lunch was followed by a twenty-question quiz/poll, results to be revealed on the last day. Then Wilson articulated his own six-point agenda and invited the commission members to address it.

1) What do Genesis 1, 2, and 3 say about "equality in creation" for men and women?

2) To what extent are Paul's writings — aside from Galatians 3:28 — affected by cultural considerations?

3) How should we reckon with scholarly

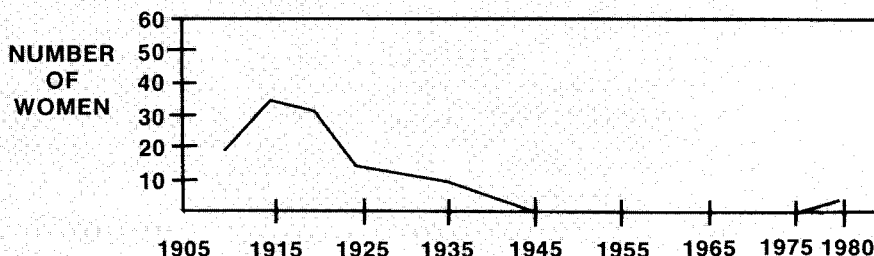
Adventist Women in Leadership

The role of women in the Adventist church's leadership positions appears to have died — along with Ellen White — in 1915.

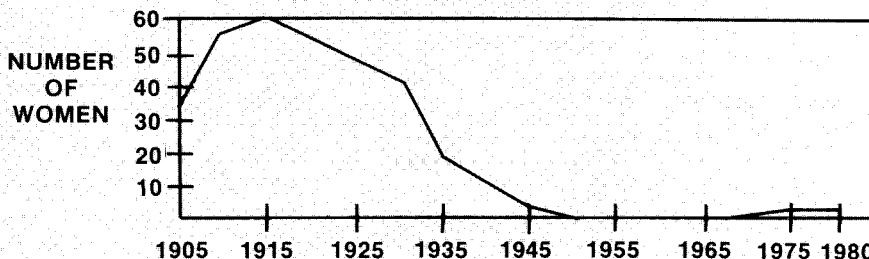
During the Women of Mission Conference held at Andrews University, July 1984, Bertha Dasher presented these and other statistics, based on a survey of the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. Women named as leaders in the Education Department, Sabbath School Department, and as Conference treasurers were counted for every five years from 1905 to 1980. The highest numbers cluster around the year 1915, the year of Ellen White's death.

These figures are all the more distressing when compared with the multiplicative growth of church membership since 1915.

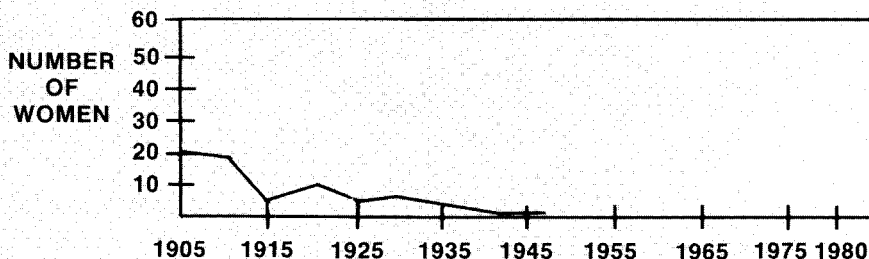
EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT LEADERS



SABBATH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT LEADERS



CONFERENCE TREASURERS



papers on the role of women in the Adventist church assigned by the Biblical Research Institute in 1973 and completed in 1975? Allowing that the scholars were sincere, Wilson asked, "Were they one-sided?"

4) Should our interpretation of the "priesthood of all believers" be used to justify women's ordination?

5) Were church decisions over the past twelve years Spirit led? Was ordaining women as local church elders a mistake? Have we held out false hopes to women seminary graduates now employed as pastors?

6) Biblical hermeneutics. Do varying interpretations of the same texts indicate that it is our presuppositions that provide the conclusions we want?

Wilson opened the floor for discussion at

3:10 p.m., and it remained opened for the next two days. Sixty substantive speeches were made by at least fifty-two individuals. Those who did not request the floor include: Lance Butler, Robert Carter, Jackson Doggette, Sr., Betty Holbrook, Rubens Lessa, Alf Lohne, Kenneth Mittleider, Enoch Olivera, George Reid (commission secretary), E. A. Roberts, A. C. Segovia, Joao Wolff, and Henry Wright.

Only two or three of the speeches were less than courteous. Watts wondered "whether the presence of women contributed to this atmosphere, including the fact that Marsha Frost, a woman pastor from the Potomac Conference, sat among us." Andrews University seminary professor Raoul Dederen said he thought "the Holy Spirit's leading could be felt among us."

An added evening session made room on the

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second (and ten-hour) day for twenty-five major speeches — twice as many favoring ordination as opposing it. Retiring General Conference vice president Francis Wernick was among the minority speakers, arguing that because ordination is to the world church, all its entities should move in lock step or not at all. Wernick felt that it would be unwise to rely on human judgment, quoting from the *Great Controversy* to emphasize Ellen White's counsel that every point of our religious faith should be founded on a "thus saith the Lord."

A couple of well-known Adventists who spoke in favor of ordination were White Estate board chairman Kenneth Wood and Andrews University president Richard Leshner. Perhaps with Olsen's "devotional" spectre of Anglican agitation for women's ordination in mind, Leshner explained that in Adventism ordination is meant to *recognize* the call of God in a person doing ministry. He asked the question, "Which is greater, to minister or to be ordained? The greater is to minister. To be ordained is simply to be recognized for that ministry."

On Wednesday evening Wilson asked the various division presidents to report the mood of the constituents to the ordination question. It emerged that those divisions most opposed were in Africa and South America, with the Far Eastern Division also reluctant to proceed.

Before lunch on Thursday, Charles Bradford, president of the North American Division, spoke for thirty minutes, eloquently, saying "I want every child of God empowered. Let us leave the Holy Spirit free to work among us!"

Bradford would probably appreciate more than most of his General Conference brethren Pastor Louis Venden's remarks at a Loma Linda University Church service (18 August 1984). Disarming arguments against women's ordination, Venden decried the use that has been made of Paul's counsel to a first-century slave saying, "That argument was used in the [nineteen] fifties with regard to race relations, but it is no better now than it was then."

Wilson spoke in the early afternoon Thursday of the "immoral and untenable" situation in North America where young women with the same training and experience as young men who are licensed are not permitted to baptize and marry their own parishoners.

Wilson said, however, that he felt a responsibility to the world family; that he had favored women's ordination more ten years ago than now; that Ellen White clearly states that "the Bible and the Bible only should be the basis of all reforms"; and he felt the need for scholarship that made much more clearly the case for women's ordination.

The solution Wilson proposed — more time and study — was mandated by the commission's vote to "maintain the present position of the church" on women's ordination — this in spite of the Autumn Council bidding to arrive at a "definitive decision."

In one of the final speeches of the session, General Conference ministerial secretary Robert

Spangler said something significant that is clearly portayed in Bertha Dasher's graphs: "Let's not obscure the fact that we have already gone backward on using women in our church. Women used to be much more significantly involved in leadership."

This concern of Spangler's and others was reflected in the commission's recommendations to improve the status and recognition of Bible workers; to remunerate the spouses of ministers who participate in team ministries; to bring more qualified women into positions where ordination is not required; and to reform the giving of ordination so that it is used exclusively to recognize ministerial gifts.

Toward the end of its last day, the commission again took the twenty-question poll. The results revealed a shift in the commission members' attitudes. On Tuesday, 35 percent favored women's ordination and 15 percent were somewhat amenable to it. By Thursday 55 percent favored ordination. There are those who would like to attribute that movement to the Spirit's working.

But the potato has been handed off until the spring of 1988 when yet another commission will examine studies prepared for them in the hope that they can recommend something specific for consideration by the 1990 General Conference. By then, it occurs to *Currents*, women's ordination will become some new General Conference president's hot potato.

Mythbuster

It is at once an encouraging and discouraging task to congratulate and commend the *Adventist Review* staff (one member in particular) for a recent and stellar specimen of editorial candor — encouraging because the candor took place; discouraging because even praise will be seen as criticism, since it implies that the *Review* is not always forthcoming.

In the first of a three-part editorial series (Feb. 14, 21, March 14), *Review* assistant editor Eugene Durand recounted the story of Ad-

ventism's first South African convert — the wealthy merchant-farmer, Pieter Wessels — basically as told by Wessels' great-grandson, Andre van Niekerk.

During the late nineteenth century, Pieter Wessels stumbled across first the Sabbath, as given in the decalogue, and then a Seventh-day Adventist American at a South African diamond mine.

After Wessels wrote James White requesting missionaries, and after sending, at Ellen White's request, sufficient money, American missionaries landed in Cape Town.

Through political influence, Wessels received from Rhodesia's Governor Rhodes all the property he could encircle on horseback in four hours. That 4,000 acres became Solusi Mission.

Wessels then decided to pattern a Cape Town sanitarium after the one at Battle Creek that he had heard so much about. His hospital up and running, it wasn't long before Wessels' friends successfully tempted him to permit smoking, drinking, and card playing on the premises. Wessels ignored a long series of rebukes in the form of letters from Mrs. White for this letting down of the standards.

Wessels' failure to hearken to the inspired counsel resulted in a string of financial disasters. He lost his chain of cattle feed stores. He sold his ranches to pay accumulating debts. The sanitarium, not covered by insurance, burned to the ground. Twenty-eight days following the sale of his most prized ranch, the Kimberly diamond mine was discovered on the property (a loss of potentially billions of dollars to the third angel's message). At last he sold his Cape Town estate and declared bankruptcy.

As Wessels moved his few remaining pieces of furniture to a hovel on Cape Town's outskirts, sixty-four unopened letters from Ellen White fell from a dining room hutch. Wessels read them in chronological order that night, weeping as he read counsels that through postmarked proof predicted each of his financial disasters, including the sanitarium fire. Added to his regrets was Mrs. White's explanation that rightly used, Wessels' money and influence could have averted the Boer War and gained respect for Adventism among South Africa's government leaders.

That night Wessels' repented and was given a second chance. He regained wealth sufficient that he and his wife between them contributed \$300,000 to the building of the Battle Creek Tabernacle and its organ and helped Kellogg to establish his food company. It was Wessels' money that arrived precisely when necessary to purchase the property Ellen White had seen in vision would be provided for Avondale College.

That is the tale of Pieter Wessels and the unopened testimonies that his grandson and Ellen White's grandson Arthur have told at camp meetings to thousands of Seventh-day Adventists.

"There is only one problem," as Eugene Durand explained in the *Review*: "This story is not true!"



Eugene Durand

Courtesy David S. Baker Portfolio

In his next installment, Durand specifically demythologized all substantial, and most peripheral, assertions in the fable. There was a wealthy Pieter Wessels who became an Adventist and whose fortune was lost during the Boer War. But there were no unopened testimonies predicting anything. No billions lost to God's cause. No horse riding around 4,000 Solusi acres (actually the mission has 12,000 acres). The sanitarium burned down while being operated as a hotel following the Boer War. Wessel's money did not purchase the Avondale College acreage, etc., etc., etc.

Four years ago, editor J. J. Aitken published van Niekerk's version of the story, as given at the 1980 Adventist-Layman's Services and Industries Convention, across seven-and-a-half pages of *A.S.I. News* (February 1981).

Weeks earlier Durand had written van Niekerk, supplying him with specific, factual challenges to almost every assertion in his story. Van Niekerk's 25 January 1981 reply was commendable: "I have never taken the time to question the accuracy or chronology of the events as portrayed to me [by grandfather]. In light of your thorough research there are large and obvious mistakes in the story . . ."

Van Niekerk explained to Durand his motivation for sharing the story: "I am a staunch supporter of the Spirit of Prophecy [he refers to Ellen White] — in part due to the impression this story made on me as a growing Christian — and especially in these times of attack on the credibility of Ellen White am I standing firm." But van Niekerk did not let his staunch support override his ethical sense. "I have a concern at the moment for the tapes that may be out there depicting the account as I have told it. What do we do? I will be the last person to want to continue these inaccuracies."

A.S.I. News editor Aitken did not share van Niekerk's concern. According to Durand he "protested that he saw no need to print a correction" of "the Wessels' legend."

Durand went on to tell "of a retired brother involved in extensive tape ministry, who is anxious to distribute the Pieter Wessels story." When Durand shared his findings with the man, he wrote back concluding: "And . . . about not selling any more Bro. Wessels tapes, I am now going to try to . . . send out thousands to every Adventist whose name I am able to get."

"Legends told by grandfathers 60 to 80 years after they are supposed to have happened . . ." Durand pointed out, "are hard to let go of . . ." He might have added that in this myth-making regard, J. N. Loughborough was the archetypal grandfather — a grandfather whose unchecked stories have been passed along to generations of Seventh-day Adventists — most recently by Durand himself in the 1983 "Adventist history issue" of the *Review*.

In that Adventist history issue, Durand recited points that he felt supported belief in Ellen White's special inspiration. He said that she "had only three grades of schooling."

Contemporary evidence provided in two recent doctoral dissertations (R. Graybill, 1983; B. Irwin, 1984) preclude further legitimate belief in this myth.

Durand repeated the claim that Ellen White held "out a large family Bible for half an hour, and she did not breathe during the visions . . ." If Durand would apply to this claim the same scholarly scrutiny he applied to the Pieter Wessels story, he would have to ask himself what A. G. Daniells asked his colleagues about the same story in 1919: "Well, just how much of this is genuine, and how much has crawled into the story?"

Following Jeremiah 28:9, Durand asserted that "when a prophet makes a prediction, it must come true"; and he suggested as one example that Ellen White "was shown beforehand the destruction of numerous cities, including the San Francisco earthquake." But Ellen White herself denies this:

Some have reported . . . that I had predicted the San Francisco earthquake and fire, and that Los Angeles would be the next city to suffer. This is not true. The morning after the earthquake, I said no more than that the earthquakes will come; the floods will come; and that the Lord's message to us is that we shall "not establish ourselves in the wicked cities" (Review and Herald 5 July 1906).

Now that he knows better, will Durand correct his propagation of this San Francisco earthquake prediction myth that is even more widely believed than the Wessels fable?

Perhaps it is understandable, but is it in the spirit of mythbusting not to ever mention in church-sponsored publications Mrs. White's failed prophecies that —

- Civil War era slave masters "must endure the seven last plagues and then come up in the second resurrection and suffer the second, most awful death" (*Early Writings*, p. 276).
- Civil War era "England is studying whether it is best to take advantage of the present weak condition of our nation, and venture to make war upon her . . . to improve her [England's] opportunities to exercise her power and humble our nation. When England does declare war, all nations will have an interest of their own to serve" (*Testimonies* 1, p. 259).
- She was shown that "Old Jerusalem never would be built up" (*Early Writings*, p. 275).
- She was shown that of "the company present at this [27 May 1856 Battle Creek] Conference . . . some . . . will be alive and remain upon the earth, to be translated at the coming of Jesus" (*Testimonies*, 1 pp. 131, 132).

Near the close of his recent mythbusting editorial series, Durand said this: "When people find out we are trying to prove the prophet's inspiration with unprovable tales, they will wonder if *anything* we say about her is true." Exactly!

Eugene Durand is to be both congratulated and consoled — congratulated for setting a *Review* precedent, and consoled for the pain it must have caused him to assume the role of mythbuster. If this series is the foretaste of a developing candor trend in the *Review*, one day soon there may no longer remain the need for any free-press adjuncts to official Seventh-day Adventist publications; and "oh, what a day of rejoicing that will be!"

"They shall die the death"

More shut-door material not included in White Estate secretary Robert Olson's 1982 collection entitled "The 'Shut Door' Documents" was released (12 April 1984) to an independent researcher, Lonnie A. Wilson, Ph.D.

The documents presented for comparison are both based on a 24 December 1850 vision experienced by Ellen White in Paris, Maine. More than six years after the great disappointment, the mother of "the caring church" was saying of those who denied the validity of the shut door, "They shall die the death."

These documents are interesting for more than their indication that White was defending vigorously the shut door at such a late date. They also illustrate the primitiveness of her speech and her unexpurgated writings.

The first and shorter document is what was taken down by an unspecified individual, as Ellen White spoke during vision. The second and longer document was written out by White herself the next day. It is not known whether the second version is based on the notes taken during the vision or whether she wrote it out from memory. Regardless, the two versions (published below) are in perfect thematic agreement (match the superscripted numbers), and much of the wording is identical.

Both versions of the Paris vision exhibit Ellen White's tendency to repeat words and phrases. But most startling is White's vision-based assertion that the unpardonable sin is saying "that the shut door was of the devil . . ." Adventist theologians, take note.

Veltman's verdict awaited

Ellen White's extensive and unacknowledged use of sources and Walter Rea's discovery of some of those sources in the late 1970s motivated the White Estate toward the end of 1978 to begin the search for an Adventist scholar to whom could be assigned the project of carefully and systematically analyzing her use of sources in *Desire of Ages*.

The burden finally fell in 1980 on the shoulders of Pacific Union College religion professor Fred Veltman. Like Ellen White

Utterances in Vision

Paris, Maine
24 December 1850

Great and holy.¹ Walk carefully before Him. High and lifted up.² Everything in perfect order,³ know what thou doest. Must be so. Move in order, move in order. A meaning to everything.⁴ Yea how perfect, how beautiful, how lovely, is this order.⁵ Let them go, let them go. Souls are coming to the knowledge of the truth.⁶ The burden not on him alone (Bro. White).⁷ Look ye, let them go. They have not moved in God at all times.⁸ Encourage it not for it will tend to destruction. There has been a stretching beyond. Look beyond the mortal.⁹ God will teach by his word and spirit. Hast thou had compassion? God suffered him to go where none had confidence in him. God loves him still, make him to hope and all will be well.¹⁰ (H.S.G.) She must make thorough work (S.C.).¹¹ O how mighty, how glorious would Israel be if they would go according to the word of God. Hast thou thought all was unadulterated? How liable is the enemy to work there. Does he frown upon his people, because they are jealous with a godly jealousy. What then? Truth, truth, present truth, the word of God.¹² Hold it before them, how beautiful to hold the word of God.¹³ Thy ways are past finding out. He never erred in wisdom. Strive to lift the mind from self. Strive to let it dwell on high and lofty things.¹⁴ They need help.¹⁵ Souls that's honest need their prejudices torn away.¹⁶ What will stand the present position. Have that the whole burden of the message. First, Second, and Third angel's messages.¹⁷ They must yield.¹⁸ The force of it how mighty it is the mighty truth. O we thank thee that we have received the truth.¹⁹ A poor, despised company, but how honored of God.²⁰ Should one tarry that has the message? Fly, fly.²¹ Buckle the armor on.²² Do we expect to be free.²³ Fight the good fight of faith.²⁴ The Laodiceans will make a struggle.²⁵ Will they [sic] the victory?²⁶ One will chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight.²⁷ Coming to conclusions.²⁸ They know not where they are.²⁹ Lost in the fog.³⁰ Terrible fear shall take hold of them.³¹ Anguish of spirit will seize them.³² Dare they admit that the door is shut?³³ They said it was of the devil, a sin against the Holy Ghost.³⁴ To admit it is against their own life.³⁵ They shall die the death.³⁶ Look ye at the pattern.³⁷ Follow Him, meek and lowly.³⁸ Shut your eyes to everything but the truth.³⁹

VISION AT PARIS, MAINE

Written 25 December 1850

We were united in praying last evening for the Spirit of the Lord to fall upon us. God heard our earnest cries. I was taken off in vision. I saw how great and holy God was.¹ Said the angel, "Walk carefully before Him, for He is high and lifted up,² and the train of His glory fills the temple." I saw that everything in heaven was in perfect order.³ Said the angel, "Look ye; Christ is the head; move in order, move in order. Have a meaning to everything."⁴ Said the angel, "Behold ye, and know how perfect, how beautiful, the order in heaven;⁵ follow it." Then I saw that the papers [*Review and Herald*] would go and that it would be the means of bringing souls to a knowledge of the truth.⁶ I saw that James had not borne the burden alone⁷ but that the angels of God had assisted and had oversight of the paper.

Then the angel pointed to Fairhaven, and said, "Ye have not moved in God at all times.⁸ There has been a stretching beyond the movings of God, and [ye] have moved in self." I saw that the mind should be taken from mortals and be raised to God.⁹

I saw that the exercises were in great danger of being adulterated, and their former opinion and knowledge governing in a measure their exercise, therefore implicit confidence could not be placed in these exercises. But if anyone was lost to everything around him, and he should be in the state that Paul was in, whether in the body or out of the body, he could not tell, and God communicate to him through His angels, there would be then no danger of a mistake.

I saw that we should strive at all times to be free from unhealthy and unnecessary excitement. I saw that there was great danger of leaving the Word of God and resting down and trusting in exercises. I saw that God had moved by His Spirit upon your company in some of their exercises and their promptings; but I saw danger ahead.

Then I saw Brother A, that there was hope for him, that God loved him still, and that before he left Fairhaven he was not humble as he should be, and did not feel his wrong, and He suffered him to take a course that would cause nearly all to let him drop. I saw that he had suffered intensely on account of his former course, and he was much humbled. He must be made to hope, and all would be well.¹⁰

Then I saw a faint hope for C. S. I saw that the course that had been taken toward her by disfellowshipping her had been right, for her jealous evil-surmising and self breaking out every little while were enough to drag down and oppress a whole meeting. Yet I saw she loved the truth and cause better than anything else, although she had often wounded it and caused it to be reproached. I saw she must make thorough work speedily,¹¹ and confess humbly her errors and wrongs, to the children of God, and then she could be healed. I saw that the church in Fairhaven should not fellowship her unless she makes an entire reformation.

I saw that the burden of the message now was the truth.¹² The Word of God should be strictly followed and held up to the people of God.¹³ And it would be beautiful and lovely if God's people should be brought into a strait [place], to see the workings of God through exercises of visions.

But I saw in our conference meeting some laid out the work that God was to give exercises, and rebels were to be purged out in the meeting. Then the honest, conscientious ones began to tremble, "I am afraid [that] I shall be purged out," and they take their minds from Jesus, and fix them upon themselves and others, and the meeting leaves them lower than it found them. I saw that we must try to lift our minds above self and have them dwell upon God, the high and lofty One.¹⁴

Then I saw souls that were needy.¹⁵ They were honest, and they needed the prejudice torn from them¹⁶ that they have received from their leaders, and then they can receive the truth. I saw [that] the burden of the message should be the first, second, and third angels' messages,¹⁷ and those who had any hope in God would yield¹⁸ to the force of that truth. How mighty and glorious it looked to me. Oh, what privilege is ours, that of being among the children of God and believing the mighty truth¹⁹ — a poor, despised company, but how honored of God!²⁰

I saw [that] if Israel moved steadily along, going according to Bible order, they would be as terrible as an army with banners. Said the angel, "Should any tarry that have the truth and can give an explanation of it from the Word of God? No, no! They must go quickly."²¹

Then I saw Brother D, that he must buckle on the armor.²² Said the angel, "Dost thou expect to be free from trials?²³ Fight the good fight of faith.²⁴ The angel of God will go before thee, and some souls will be benefited and receive the truth."

Then I saw Laodiceans.* They will make a mighty effort.²⁵ Will they get the victory?²⁶ One who has the truth will chase a thousand, and two will put ten thousand to flight.²⁷ They are coming to conclusions that bring them into close quarters,²⁸ and they cannot tell where they be themselves,²⁹ for they are lost in the foggy,³⁰ terrible fear that takes hold of them.³¹ Anguish of spirit will seize them.³² Dare they admit that the door is shut?³³ The sin against the Holy Ghost was to ascribe to Satan what belongs to God or what the Holy Ghost has done.³⁴ They said the shut door was of the devil and now admit it is against their own lives.³⁵ They shall die the death.³⁶ Look ye at the Pattern.³⁷ Follow Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart.³⁸ Shut your eyes to everything but the present, saving truth.³⁹

*The nominal, or first-day, Adventists.

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herself, Veltman was the third choice behind James Cox (Andrews University New Testament scholar) and Larry Richards (PUC religion faculty chairman). Veltman, however, is by no means the "weakest of the weak."

Contemplating the necessity of a study into the Ellen White life of Christ writings, White Estate secretary Robert Olson exhibited ambivalence in a 29 November 1978 letter to his White Estate colleagues. He reflected that the Estate was "as anxious as anyone else to know what the facts were, and that we would encourage any research that would be done that would lead us to a fuller understanding of the situation."

But two paragraphs later he said, "Whatever attitude we assume at this time, I do not believe that we will stop this kind of investigation from going on. We might wish that all such investigations would cease, but our wishing will not bring about any such results I am confident."

With a doctoral degree in hermeneutics from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, Veltman was a natural for the study into Ellen White's source dependency. Funded by the General Conference, Veltman's work began in September of 1980, despite thirteen concerns expressed in writing by Arthur White. His eleventh point particularly suggests his suspicion of an educated scrutiny of his grandmother's literary product:

If participated in by Andrews University — are the scholars trained in methods of research by universities known to have demolished faith in the Bible . . . capable of passing proper judgment in areas where absolute honesty in the acceptance of records and faith based on evidence are important factors?

Olson's ambivalence and White's suspicions seem to be sufficiently typical of denominational leadership's attitudes that the eventual availability of Veltman's efforts to the Adventist membership remains a question.

Will Neal Wilson allow Veltman to summarize his findings in the *Adventist Review*? Since the \$120,000-plus that the study has cost is paid for by church members, it may be argued that the members have a right to the information. And some members have questioned the morality of a few men deciding what an entire class of people may know about their religious roots. Veltman has said that Wilson told him that "the General Conference leadership plans to make the results of this study known to the church at large." A sentence in Wilson's 9 July 1981 *Adventist Review* article seems to confirm this. He wrote that "once the study has been completed . . . the General Conference leadership . . . will determine in what form this can best be shared with the general church membership worldwide."

In order to be objective in his White research, and at the same time spare himself unwarranted criticism, Veltman set up a method for comparing Mrs. White's published material with her sources that would satisfy the most conservative person. From eighty-seven *Desire of Ages*

chapters, he chose five long, five medium, and five short chapters — fifteen in all — for scrutiny. He and a number of volunteer assistants used either a full sentence or an independent clause as their unity of comparison. In the fifteen chapters they had approximately 2,600 such units.

Every independent clause from the fifteen chapters was evaluated and categorized into one of thirteen different levels of dependency. Veltman has provided the material from Ellen White, the material from her source, the criteria for his evaluation, and then his application of that criteria. Then, says Veltman, "if you are interested, or some other scholar or critic is interested, you can throw out my evaluation and apply your own evaluation to the criteria."

Veltman has given sketchy preliminary reports of his findings to special gatherings. At one such meeting in Lancaster, California (October 1984), Veltman said that "Walter [Rea] in his studies found that when Ellen White moved from the *Gift of Prophecy* (two volumes, small pages) to the four-volume *Spirit of Prophecy* to the other volumes of the Conflict of the Ages series, and the work was expanded, it was expanded because she was more and more into the sources."

At first, Veltman said, he and his staff were not finding much copying, and they soon found

administrators of the church are most concerned about. Veltman has quickly answered that it has not changed his attitude at all. He chuckled in Lancaster when he quoted someone as saying that he (Veltman) didn't believe in her to begin with; so, naturally, his attitude has not changed. Then, seriously, he said that he believed in her inspiration wholeheartedly. That has always been his answer, even though the matter of inspiration — or Veltman's understanding of it — is, of course, another question.

While Veltman seems reluctant to give any advance notice of his findings, he was not wary about telling *Currents* in late April that of the fifteen *Desire of Ages* chapters under investigation, there was one chapter ("Blessing the Children") in which he had found only one dependent sentence. Veltman does not therefore assume that the chapter is original — understanding as he does the difficulty in proving a negative.

Very recently Walter Rea has found paragraphs published over Mrs. White's byline in the *Health Reformer* and *Good Health* that later appear, slightly modified, in the "Blessing the Children" *Desire of Ages* chapter (see box). (*Good Health* was a later name given to the *Health Reformer*.)

Although Rea has not located the source from which Ellen White "borrowed" these particular *Health Reformer/Good Health* paragraphs, he does not feel that it matters. He indicates why by quoting from a Robert Olson letter of 30 December 1983: "My personal opinion is that the *Health Reformer* articles were basically written by a columnist Ellen White. I do not believe that she had on her mantle of prophet when she was preparing these materials month by month for the *Health Reformer*."

In January this year Veltman wrote to Neal Wilson asking that the General Conference support a continuance of his research project so that he could pursue several interesting leads he has uncovered. Pacific Union College president Malcolm Maxwell told *Currents* that he wrote a letter to Wilson in support of Veltman's request, adding that very recently Wilson's assistant, Arthur Patzer, had communicated with Veltman his boss' refusal of the request. (Wilson already has in hand Veltman's completed study on five of the fifteen *Desire of Ages* chapters.)

Maxwell said for the immediate future he has suggested three options for Veltman: 1) PUC would support another year of his *Desire of Ages* study. 2) He could return to classroom teaching in the religion department. 3) He could assist PUC's new academic dean, Charles Bell, with strategic planning, research, and development projects.

With Veltman in kind administrative hands at PUC, it remains to be hoped that Neal Wilson will treat the Adventist membership to a thorough representation of Veltman's 1,000-plus page analysis of approximately seventeen percent of the *Desire of Ages* — no matter who wrote the book.



Fred Veltman

out why. "By the time you are reading Ellen White," he said, "the material has been through Marian Davis' hands, and it's been edited, so that you don't have Ellen White at that stage in that sense . . . There is no question that Ellen White has used sources more than we have understood her to use. Ellen is not only dependent — by the way that is not new; Walter Rea said that — but Ellen White also has followed the development of thought where a writer has developed a thought."

At Lancaster, as at his other meetings, the question most frequently asked of Veltman was: Has your research changed your attitude toward Ellen White? That is really what the

Walter Rea provided *Currents* with this example in which a *Good Health* (vol. XXXI no. 7, July 1896, p. 206) paragraph winds up in *Desire of Ages* (1898, p. 516):

***Good Health* — GH *Desire of Ages* — DA**

GH If you would train a rare pink, or rose, or lily, how would you
 DA If you would train a pink, or rose, or lily, how would you
 GH minister to it? Ask the gardener by what process he makes every
 DA do it? Ask the gardener by what process he makes every
 GH branch and leaf to flourish so beautifully, to develop in
 DA branch and leaf to flourish so beautifully, and to develop in
 GH symmetry and loveliness. He will tell you that it is by no rude
 DA symmetry and loveliness. He will tell you that it was by no rude
 GH touch, no violent effort, for this would only break the boughs,
 DA touch, no violent effort; for this would only break the delicate
 GH but by little attentions, oft repeated. He moistens
 DA stems. It was by little attentions, often repeated. He moistened
 GH the soil, and protects the plants from the fierce blasts
 DA the soil, and protected the growing plants from the fierce blasts
 GH and from the scorching sun, and God, by his miraculous power,
 DA and from the scorching sun, and God,
 GH causes the plants to flourish and to blossom into loveliness.
 DA caused them to flourish and to blossom into loveliness.
 GH Parents should follow the method of the gardener
 DA In dealing with your children, follow the method of the gardener.
 GH in dealing with their children . . . to fashion their characters
 DA . . . seek to fashion their characters
 GH after the divine model.
 DA after the pattern of the character of Christ.

Note: Several researchers, whose names are withheld here, have come to the conclusion that the White Estate administrators have been correct all along when they said that Ellen White did not, indeed, copy extensively from her sources. The truth may be that her "copyists," as she herself called them, did.

Bedlam at Georgia-Cumberland triennium

The 24th Triennial Session of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference Constituency began and ended on 21 April 1985 in bedlam.

After conference president Gary Patterson's devotional, recent lay movement was exhibited as several constituents spoke through strategically located microphones. An example of the voice of the people was a layman's (Raymond McDonald of Cleveland, Georgia) request to add two items to the agenda: that the conference send only twenty percent of the tithe outside of the conference rather than the forty percent currently transferred to higher administrative bodies; and that each church in the conference be staffed by at least one pastor, with churches over 200 members employing additional staff. The motion failed.

The anticipated hot item on the agenda surfaced when the proposed new constitution and bylaws of the conference were introduced for discussion. The chair had imposed a ninety-minute limit on discussion of the new document that all constituents had received in the mail well in advance of the meeting. A motion was carried to defer the Organizing Committee (and thus the Nominating Committee) meeting until after the vote on the new document, thereby

placing some of the major business of the day nearly two hours behind schedule.

Although the twenty-page document was familiar to the delegates, a major portion of the floor discussion stalled on the proposed reduction of delegates to future constituency meetings, from one lay member in thirty-five to the proposed one lay member in fifty. The committee that drafted the document was on the platform to field questions; and they argued that a democratic process would still be in place—but with a delegate population in line with the 400-500 members of sister conferences.

This discussion was only warm compared to the heat generated by the proposal to eliminate the existing practice of appointing one teacher from each conference school as a delegate. The educators were furious, but it was pointed out that teachers could still be delegates if chosen by their local church. The intention of this proposal was to increase the ratio of laymen to workers. The revised constitution and bylaws were discussed for about five hours in another room after lunch.

Another feature of the revised constitution provides that the twenty-four member Nominating Committee chosen at the constituency

meeting be retained for three years (as opposed to one day), and that it meet with the Conference Executive Committee to choose new officers and departmental men between constituency meetings.

But the biggest surprise was yet to come. When the Nominating Committee finally began its work at 2:45 p.m., it was expected to be a short meeting. The conference report was given during that time; and with a gain of 150 baptisms over the year before, a 2.3 percent tithe increase, and an excellent report on Davenport monies recovered, it seemed that the incumbent administration had performed commendably. In fact, Gary Patrick (the conference-secured non-Seventh-day Adventist attorney handling the Davenport affair) stated that the constituents owed the recovery of \$2.2 million of the \$3.2 million lost to Davenport investments to the untiring efforts of President Patterson and the conference committee. The constituents responded with resounding applause.

At about 7:30 p.m. (the constituents are usually dismissed by 4:30 p.m.) the Nominating Committee presented its strange and unexplained decision to invite Elder John Loor, president of the Southern New England Conference, to be the new Georgia-Cumberland Conference president. (The Nominating Committee in chambers had rejected the incumbent Patterson by a vote of seventeen to five.) After a shocked constituency had spoken their mind about Patterson, pro and con, the vote was taken for Loor. A clear split was evident: Loor lost by seven votes short of a simple majority.

The Nominating Committee was sent back to its unsmoke-filled room, and then returned to hear a floor-voted suggestion (approximately 280-230 in favor) that they nominate Patterson. The Nominating Committee reconsidered his name, this time rejecting it by a one vote margin.

The final name brought by the Nominating Committee was Elder Joel Tompkins, president of the Mid-America Union. His name passed the delegates by one hundred votes; and the meeting was recessed until Mother's Day, three weeks later, at which time the business of electing a conference office staff and executive committee would be completed.

After two requests for more time to think, Elder Tompkins turned down the Georgia-Cumberland "opportunity." In an April 29 letter to the delegates, Union president Al McClure indicated that the constituency meeting would reconvene on Sunday, May 12; that only those who attended as delegates or alternates to the first session would be permitted to attend the second meeting. Interestingly, the Nominating Committee was scheduled to meet at 9:00 a.m., with those wishing to address the committee invited to be present; the regular meeting was scheduled for 11:00 a.m.

Twenty-four people addressed the Nominating Committee, twenty of whom favored the

OF CURRENT INTEREST

retention of Patterson as president; but it made no difference.

Following a devotional by Douglas Bennet (Southern College religion department professor) and several prayers, McClure opened the 11:00 a.m. meeting by saying, "I didn't come to fight today as I'm outnumbered. And I hope you don't have the fighting spirit, either." Considerable discussion time was spent deciding whether or not to follow parliamentary procedure, but the assembly finally voted to do so.

The chairman acknowledged the disunity and his hopes that the dilemma would be resolved in a fair, open manner. Several comments were made from the floor concerning personnel, among them a prepared statement by the Dalton, Georgia, Church constituency indicating that the ousting of Patterson was the result of an ultraconservative minority influence and not representative of the delegates in general.

Some time after 2:00 p.m. the Nominating Committee rendered its verdict: a twenty-four to nothing vote for William Geary, president of the Gulf-States Conference. His name cleared the floor, with fifty-two abstaining, 540-90 in favor.

No reason has ever been given by the Nominating Committee for not renominating a successful conference president. Georgia-Cumberland workers, nevertheless, believe that Patterson's ouster will result in either a division presidency or a General Conference vice presidency for Al McClure.

And all this out of bedlam.

Quinquennial millions

The cost of the quinquennial gathering of the Seventh-day Adventist world church family at the Superdome in New Orleans has been roughly estimated by one who intends to go and sit through it all. Most of his figures are conservative and the sum the minimum cost to the church of just the 2,300 delegates:

Air transport (\$500 each)	\$1,150,000
Lodging (\$700 each)	1,610,000
Food (\$300 each)	690,000
Salaries (\$770 each for two weeks)	1,771,000
Pre-session seminars (\$10)	23,000
Ground transportation (\$200)	460,000
Miscellaneous (reimbursable, \$200)	460,000
Total	\$6,164,000

These figures do not include the costs of putting on the session itself (For a single evening event, the Superdome generally rents for a minimum of \$20,000.), nor does it account for any private costs. It is easy to imagine that the cost of hosting the quinquennium would match the minimum \$6,164,000 needed to transport, house, and feed the 2,300 delegates. And the cost to

nondelegate visiting Adventists might well match the delegate and session costs combined. That is twenty-five million dollars spent on Seventh-day Adventist propinquity!

A recent *Review* indicates that there will be a parade of Adventist delegates through downtown New Orleans on Monday, July 1, at 1:00 P.M. As they parade, the delegates plan to distribute to the waiting crowds (well, they hope there will be waiting crowds) souvenir tokens or "throws" with various Adventist mottoes on them.

A recent *Review* editorial puts great stress on how heavy the agenda is — so heavy that the opening time was moved up two whole hours to accommodate it. But so far there has been very little in the *Adventist Review* about the nature of that agenda — a sad fact for a church that professes to be representative, which requires informing and involving the members.

In spite of the expense, the July New Orleans climate, and the private nature of the agenda, a plenary appearance by the Holy Spirit could make it all worthwhile.

Christians in Crisis

"Seventh-day Adventists generally are pitifully uninformed of the plight of their brothers and sisters under oppressive governments," says Sidney Reiners, president of "Christians in Crisis," a new organization formed to help remedy this information vacuum.

"Church publications seem determined to not inform us," Reiners complains, "of the heart-rending cases of Adventists who are being

persecuted, imprisoned and mistreated."

Reiners is concerned that there is within Adventism "no voice for these people." He believes "God has called us to remedy" this "deplorable situation." And Reiners is not sitting on his hands. He has researched carefully and written articles on the injustices done to Seventh-day Adventists (sometimes by church leaders) behind the iron curtain, such as "Russia: the Anguish of Adventism" and "Betrayal in Budapest."

Christians in Crisis plans to initiate publicity campaigns to help free imprisoned Adventists; to produce audiovisual materials on the topic; and to translate the writings of the recently martyred Vladimir Shelkov, former leader of the True and Free Seventh-day Adventists in Russia.

Most immediately planned is a reception that Christians in Crisis is hosting (June 27-29) for delegates and visitors to the General Conference Quinquennium in New Orleans. The reception will feature Alexander Ginzburg (a one-time cellmate of Vladimir Shelkov); and H. Noble Alexander, an ordained Adventist minister who spent twenty-two years in Cuban prisons.

The Christians in Crisis New Orleans reception will be held in the University Room of the Fairmont Hotel at University Place, from 2:00 to 10:00 P.M., June 27-29, with speakers featured at seven-thirty each evening.

For further information about the plans and needs of Christians in Crisis, write: Sidney Reiners, Christians in Crisis, 1111 Fairgrounds Road, Grand Rapids, Minnesota 55744.

□



Louisiana Superdome

Courtesy Superdome

Wilson in Midstream

by George Colvin

Of the probable political events expected to transpire at the upcoming General Conference Session, the most certain is the re-election of General Conference president Neal C. Wilson to a second full term. There is no evidence that he wishes to leave this position, nor is there any prospect that the overwhelming support he enjoyed at his "interim election" in 1979 and his confirmation in office at the General Conference Session in 1980 will weaken in 1985. General Conference watchers, therefore, are concerned not with presidential electoral probabilities but with understanding Adventism's recent past and immediate future, with which President Wilson has been and will be closely connected.

Wilson's tenure in the presidency, after all, has been comparatively short — however long it may have seemed to some. Since the General Conference was founded in 1863, only fourteen men have held the presidency — an average tenure of almost nine years. Only four of the fourteen served fewer years in this position than Wilson's six years to date. Wilson's two immediate predecessors, Robert Pierson and R. R. Figuhr, served for thirteen years and twelve years, respectively. Neither of them approached the record twenty-one years achieved by A. G. Daniells (1901-1922). Wilson probably has not overstayed his welcome.

Nor is Wilson in danger because of age. As the world church has grown and its structure has become more complex, the age at election of General Conference presidents has increased. The average age at election of the fourteen General Conference presidents was 51.5 years. But this figure masks an important change. For the first seven presidents (1863-1888), this figure was 46 years of age; for the seven presidents since 1888, it has risen to 58. Wilson's 59 years of age at election thus fits current patterns.

Wilson's upcoming re-election thus requires no political speculation. But it is an excellent opportunity to examine the record of Adventism under Wilson and to look forward to the major concerns that will face his second administration. This examination can be done by reviewing several concerns that have affected Adventism, especially at the General Conference level, over the last six years and suggesting their effect in the future. In this review it must be

remembered that Wilson does not bear sole responsibility for Adventism's achievements or failures during his six years in the presidency. The Adventist church has grown very large, and it has lost in responsiveness what it has gained in mass. Its history and governing ideas also limit its maneuverability; and the committee system by which Adventism operates dilutes any one administrator's authority and makes individual credit or blame hard to fix. With this warning in mind, a glance at these issues can still be helpful in understanding where Adventism has been and where it will (and should) go.

1. Dissent. The immediate problem of Desmond Ford was the first major difficulty to confront Wilson's administration. Although its elements had existed for some time, it exploded with Ford's address in October 1979. The matter soon went to the General Conference. Ford was given a one-year study leave. He wrote a massive defense of his views, which was presented to a mixed group of administrators and scholars at Glacier View. This group produced somewhat ambiguous statements suggesting a shift in Adventist positions in Ford's direction. Ford himself was presented with an unacceptable ultimatum by an all-administrator

Council, to almost universal approbation. That his opinion may have been technically faulty and short-sighted did not prevent it from being politically popular. [Editor's note: For a more extensive comment on this talk, see the author's article, "Getting It Wrong: Neal Wilson and the AAF," in the February 1985 issue of *Adventist Currents*.]

How one assesses these events depends on one's priorities. Both Ford's proposals and the general drift of dissent from the left involved lowering the position given under Robert Pierson to the works of Ellen G. White, which Richard Goynes correctly considered almost "Third Testamental" ("Toward a Third Testament," *Adventist Currents*, February 1985). This in turn implied a revolution in the way Adventist ideas are formed. With Ellen White's works reduced to an advisory role, Adventists would have had to rely on biblical interpretation for doctrine. Because the Bible is less "accessible" for readers without specialized education (including most administrators) than are Ellen White's works, this approach would have increased the power of Adventist biblical scholars at the expense of the laity and administrators. Some traditional Adventist ideas hard to support from biblical evidence alone, such as the sanctuary and the 1844 investigative judgment, might well have fallen. Without these

Under Wilson's sponsorship . . . the 1980 General Conference Session tied Adventism closely to Ellen White's authority and gave it the functional equivalent of a creed.

committee, after which he was stripped of his ministerial credentials. This move accompanied a longer campaign, fostered by the General Conference, to brand Ford's views unacceptable anywhere in the Adventist church and to expel members and especially ministers who held them. This program has largely succeeded, and the resulting evangelical groups seem to parallel previous Adventist split offs in posing no organizational threat to the parent body.

Dissent has also been evident on the Adventist left, especially from the usual suspects — Adventist academia and especially the Association of Adventist Forums (AAF). Wilson made his views on the latter clear at the Annual

distinctives, the reason for Adventism's separate existence and especially for its evangelical program (historically directed to those already Christian) would have become murky.

There is no evidence that Adventists in general wanted such changes to occur, and it is likely that Wilson's general course of action regarding Ford (if not all the details of its execution) had worldwide support. The price of this action was an enormous amount of intolerance — also sponsored by the General Conference, most notably through its enthusiastic endorsement of the pseudo-historical hate tract *Omega*. Violations of fair treatment of dissenters have abounded, and Adventism's

George Colvin is a Ph.D. candidate in government at Claremont Graduate School.

hard-won acceptance by evangelical Christians has been endangered. Under Wilson's sponsorship, too, the 1980 General Conference Session tied Adventism closely to Ellen White's authority and gave it the functional equivalent of a creed — and a sectarian and dubiously Christian one at that. The attitudes fostered by this process have encouraged the already considerable Adventist tendency toward narrowness, faultfinding, and exclusion of those judged behaviorally or theologically deficient — an approach that makes the "Caring Church" ideal (a recent General Conference slogan) harder to attain. Finally, the political process simply buried the substantial amount of truth in Ford's critique and the long-term dangers in Adventist sectarianism; these problems will therefore re-emerge.

Out of this problem, however, some possible procedural good emerged. The rending con-

the greatest area of success for Adventism in Wilson's first six years; and it is an area whose importance Adventist liberals in particular often underestimate.

At the same time, troublesome trends have emerged. The North American Division will fall well short of its "Thousand Days of Reaping" goal. The publishing work, source of many Adventist converts in the past, is deeply troubled. Adventism has shown no ability to convert people in higher socioeconomic groups in the developed world; and the efforts of the General Conference's Secularism Committee in this direction, though a step in the right direction, are insufficient and too much based on shallow thinking about the nature of the world in which Adventism exists.

Perhaps most troublesome are divisions within Adventism that evangelism is enhancing. The areas of greatest membership increase are

As General Conference archivist F. Donald Yost has shown, the total net worth of the Adventist church in North America (an important share of worldwide net worth) has increased at a rate far beyond that of membership and is now at its highest level — except for publishing-connected areas, which are declining.

The debit side of the financial area has more to do with trends than with present realities — although recent developments in the Midwest suggest that the Davenport matter cannot yet be laid to rest. Yost's candid examination of church finances found that liabilities as a percentage of assets are at historic highs. For every dollar of assets, the Adventist church in North America now has 52 cents of liabilities. Tithe per capita in North America, adjusted for inflation, rose steadily from 1930 to 1970; but from 1970 to 1980 it decreased by about 10 percent, and the 3.5 percent absolute increase from 1981 to 1982 was well below the rate of inflation. Contributions to Sabbath School and Ingathering are decreasing in absolute amounts and still more after adjustments for inflation.

Most worrisome are the political implications of the increasing separation between the location of Adventist members (predominantly overseas) and the source of Adventist money (the United States). If these trends continue, the Adventist church will grow poorer per capita in Wilson's second full term. Furthermore, the willingness of Adventists in North America to continue to support financially an administrative structure in which their influence is lessening is open to question. Also doubtful is the willingness of Anglo congregations within North America to support non-Anglo ones financially. The traditional Adventist offering envelope provides many opportunities for quiet redirection of funds within the structure; and there is evidence that these opportunities are being used. General Conference responses to this development (such as commanding congregations to give any loose funds in the offering plate to General Conference-selected causes) have so far been inadequate.

4. *Church Structure and Miscellaneous Problems.* The Davenport problem was even more structural than financial. It showed the low level of ethics among many Adventist administrators and the great difficulty the Adventist system has in dealing with malfeasance by politically influential leaders (a difficulty, it has been noticed, that the system has not exhibited in handling academics or ordinary members). In general, the response to this problem has been to strengthen General Conference authority, at least on paper. Wilson has denounced the two major efforts to increase lay involvement structurally (the North Pacific Union Conference reorganization and the report of the AAF Task Force on Church Structure).

The problem with this response is the probable reaction of the laity. Creative laity will only become involved when they perceive they can make the system responsive to their needs. As policymaking becomes centered at a level

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flits the evangelical crisis produced in many places forced recognition of Adventist diversity that will also help the Adventist left and Adventist academics. In response, the 1984 Annual Council established fairer procedures for handling theological dissent by church employees in general and moved toward greater academic freedom. Because these actions implicitly recognized pluralism and therefore run counter to the push for closer definition and stricter enforcement of Adventist doctrine, how they work out in practice will be interesting. Also of interest will be the development of the ombudsman idea proposed by the President's Review Commission and also accepted at the 1984 Annual Council. An ombudsman could be a powerless, useless functionary. He or she could also be the opening wedge for the semi-independent church judicatory that Adventism badly needs in order to attain due process in handling theological and policy disputes and to reduce litigation among Adventists and between individual Adventists and the church.

2. *Evangelism.* This area has been perhaps the single most strongly stressed Adventist concern since Pierson's election to the General Conference presidency in 1966, and this emphasis has in general paid off. Since 1966, Adventist worldwide membership has approximately tripled. Adventist worldwide visibility should increase further with the completion of a new radio facility on Guam. The "Thousand Days of Reaping" evangelistic campaign will probably exceed its worldwide goal of adding 1,000,000 new Adventists in less than three years. Without question, evangelism has been

poor, largely Roman Catholic countries outside the North American Division. Together with the higher reproductive rate in such areas, this development will increase the already dramatic trend toward making Adventism a Third World religion whose members predominantly will be poor, non-English speaking, and ill educated. Even within the North American Division, membership growth is greatest among low-income minority groups. The white Anglo-Saxon group that has provided most of the church's leadership and money is dwindling in proportion to the whole. In addition, an age gap is emerging. According to one report, Hispanic Adventists in the United States average twenty-eight years of age, black Adventists average thirty-five years, and white Adventists average fifty-three years. Adventist sociologist Ronald Lawson has called attention to the extraordinary diversity of Adventism in North America and worldwide and to the many conflicts and divisions that this diversity promotes.

3. *Church Finance.* The Davenport difficulties have been part of the very mixed bag of results in this area. Under Wilson's administration, the Adventist church has remained financially strong to a level far beyond most churches of its size. Adventist hospitals, which have become a major source both of income and of debt for Adventism, expanded and systematized. The Davenport problem, in which less money will be lost than was initially feared, produced increased concern with conflict of interest and some procedural changes that should make such problems less likely, as well as an enormous amount of mainly bad publicity.

remote from them, these creative laity will not waste their time on the system in general. Except for their local congregation, Adventism will increasingly become "them," not "us." The consequences of this approach in evangelism (where it fosters reliance on paid staff and on such mechanical methods as television and the

1990. This is true even if the stated reason for doing so (the need for more theological investigation) seems transparently specious. The issue arose so late in the process of forming the 1985 General Conference Session agenda that the mind of Adventism in general could not have been consulted about it. Had it been brought to

method to obtain the mind of the church on other important concerns. The absence of any worldwide channel for Adventist news and views is a continuing scandal in a putatively representative church; and no amount of special study commissions (a useful but not universally adequate innovation of Wilson's first term) can substitute for it.

This summary suggests that Wilson's six years have been in some ways years of considerable progress. They have also been years of unresolved problems, some of which have gotten worse.

The major challenge for Wilson's second full term is to get Adventism to abandon the reactive style of decision making that has become almost an Adventist standard. In its place the church must adopt some clear ideas of where it wants to go, how it proposes to get there, and how it will know it has arrived. All of these ideas must recognize the reality of the world in which Adventism exists and the nature of the Adventist church today, neither of which can be much changed by exhortation alone. To do this, the church needs a highly competent interdisciplinary, analytical, and planning function whose members have enough job protection to survive telling leaders what they do not want to know. And Wilson must ask whether other church leaders and staff, in the General Conference and elsewhere, are adequate for the job. He and they must also be thinking about his replacement in 1990, who could well be the first non-North American president.

In meeting the church's emerging needs, Wilson may find some of his first-term baggage a real impediment. In particular, the elevation of Ellen White — which Pierson and Wilson both fostered — tends to trap Adventism in a nineteenth-century time warp in message and method. This inclination is dangerous for a church facing the twenty-first century. It encourages members to live in a fantasy world; and it tends to render the church's societal activities harmful. An example of this harmfulness is Adventist religious liberty policy in the United States. In obedience to nineteenth-century imperatives, it continues to suspect religion in public affairs and to see organized religion as the greatest danger to religious liberty, when in fact the absence of any guiding ethic for public life and a pervasive secularism are the greatest present dangers to American public affairs and religious freedom. Finally, if persisted in long enough such anachronistic thoughts and actions will make Adventism merely a quaint Victorian hangover — a curious survival that sociologists will enjoy investigating but which no reasonable person would want to experience.

The challenge of the twenty-first century is coming at great speed. Wilson's next administration cannot ignore it, as his first administration too often did. That challenge can only be overcome or failed. If Wilson meets this challenge, he will do more than attaining re-election in 1985; he will show that he deserved it.

The major challenge for Wilson's second full term . . . is to abandon the reactive style of decision making that has become almost an Adventist standard.

Guam radio station) are already being felt and denounced by perceptive pastors. The lack of vibrant involvement will also contribute to the growing tendency of Adventists in major United States centers to accommodate their behavior to the world around them. Involvement of laity on conference committees and other such bodies will be useful only if those bodies have considerable freedom to maneuver; otherwise it is merely a sham.

The status of the North American Division is an important structural question. The 1984 Annual Council gave North America marginally greater latitude, but in conformity with Wilson's views it refused to give North America separate divisional status. This decision means that North American problems will continue to bedevil the General Conference. It also raises the question of North America's reaction to the internationalization of the General Conference even now in process, which will increasingly place North America's internal affairs in the hands of those who are at least unfamiliar with it and may in some ways dislike it.

One other structural problem is the relationship of the Adventist Health System/U.S. (AHS/US) to the church as a whole. The net worth of health-care institutions now represents more than one-fourth of the total net worth of Adventist institutions in the North American Division; and the much greater professionalism of its management is rapidly making AHS/US much more than the message's right arm. There is also a deep and largely unresolved question about how "Adventist" a hospital can be when its Adventism is more and more limited to its corporate documents, some idiosyncratic cafeteria policies, and its Board of Trustees.

The debate on the ordination of women is a test of inclusiveness, both substantively and procedurally. So long as ordination remains an informal necessity for most Adventist policymaking positions, lay members in general and women in particular will be excluded. This exclusion is far more important for the life of the church than whether women can marry and baptize.

At the same time, however, the special commission on ordination and the General Conference Committee acted properly in putting off a final decision on this matter until

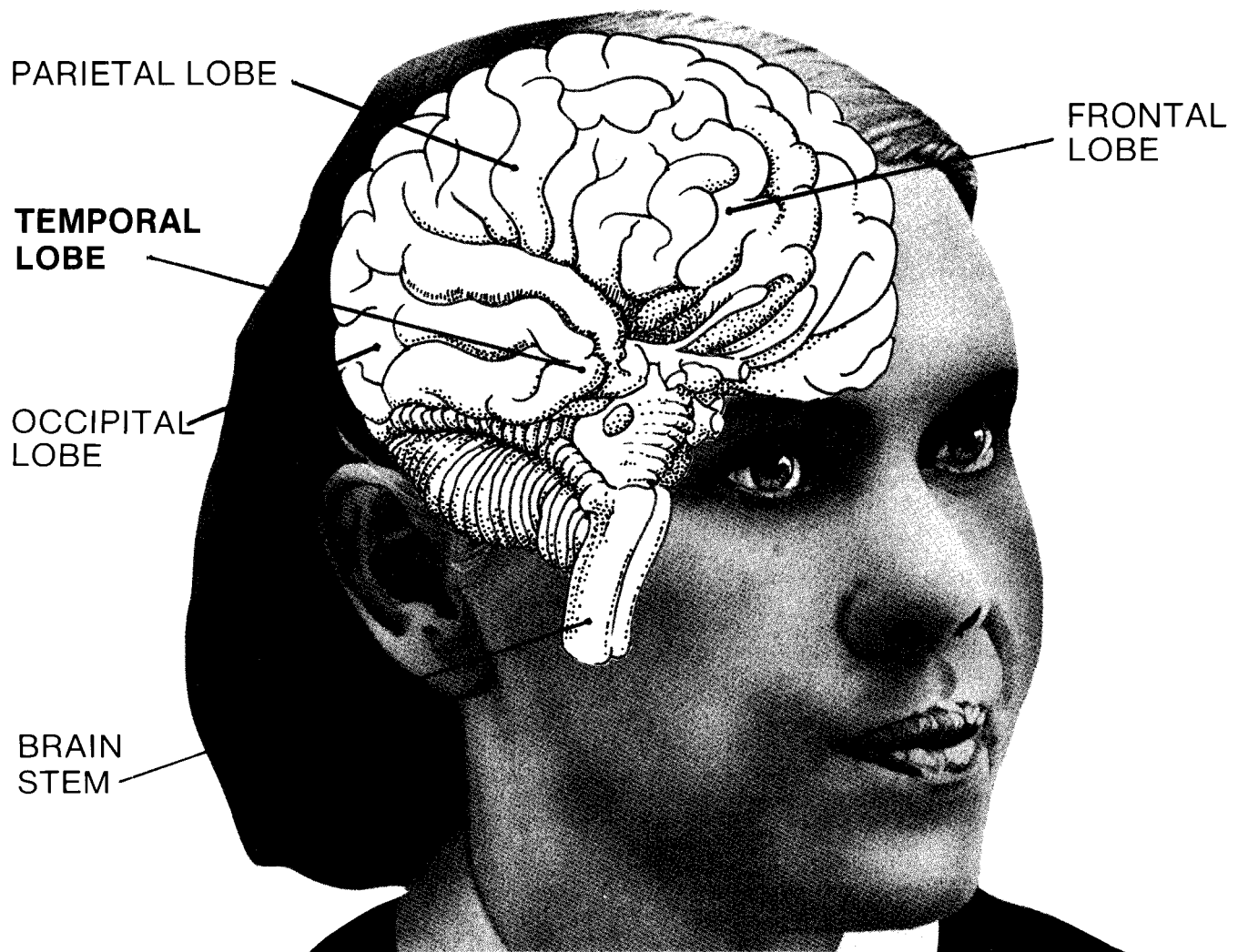
the 1985 Session, it would probably have been defeated; and even had it been passed, the women ordained as a result could not have claimed the sanction of a church consensus in their favor. Their ordination would have had to rest on an act of General Conference force uninformed by the sentiments of the church at large on the issue or any worldwide exchange of views concerning it. That is not the way for a church with any pretensions to representativeness to behave in a matter that (whether it should or not) may affect the spiritual lives of its members.

This five-year delay will cause a lot of heartache for many Adventist women, especially the associates in pastoral care. Church administrators must resist the temptation to sigh in relief at dodging this issue. What they have gotten is a brief postponement, not a permanent adjournment. The time must be used creatively, both in academic study (to the extent more is needed) and in thoughtful discussion of this issue worldwide. Because the unclarity of biblical and Ellen White counsel on this matter leaves people more open to legitimate disagreement than on more defined issues, the question of the ordination of women could be an excellent tool for the construction of an ongoing



Neal C. Wilson

Courtesy David S. Baker portfolio



The attempt to understand Ellen G. White and her visions has taken many forms. Few are more interesting than the exhaustive research of Dr. Molleurus Couperus, retired physician and founding editor of *Spectrum* magazine.

Couperus' article, "The Significance of Ellen White's Head Injury" — termed "overkill" by one basically approving neurologist — is the author's effort to understand how Ellen White might honestly feel, believe, and claim that God was coming to her repeatedly in vision — even if it wasn't so.

The reasons why one might question Ellen White's claims are myriad, but one class of reasons stands out. When Ellen White insisted she had seen something in vision, or said I was shown, or (most significant) purported to be quoting an angel, her guide, or Jesus Himself, and the very words are now found published in an earlier article or book, rational human beings may be forgiven for disbelieving her veracity.

But since Mrs. White is such an integral part of our Adventist roots, and since it is disconcerting to think of mother as mendacious, we look for mitigating circumstances or alternate explanations that might rescue her integrity.

The notion that a mild form of posttrauma seizure could explain both her "visions" and her personality foibles seems, therefore, attractive. Most neurologists agree that a missile-induced head injury such as the one that caused Ellen Harmon three weeks of coma followed by amnesia at age nine increases manifold the likelihood that she would develop subsequently some kind of seizure disorder.

While a neurological explanation for Ellen White's visions appears to have the potential to rescue her reputation as a truthful woman, it simultaneously seems to preclude supernatural explanations.

White Estate officials have repeatedly indicated their *a priori* rejection of any naturalistic causes for Mrs. White's visions — having gone so far as to establish an Ellen G. White Health Committee from among the medical staff at Loma Linda University to pronounce the impossibility that any form of temporal lobe epilepsy could account for White's visionary experiences (see *Adventist Currents* vol. 1, no. 4, p. 5).

Because the thesis of Couperus' article will so scandalize many Seventh-day Adventists, it seems only fair to let the author make his best

case — including all 210 references.

It is clear that wide disagreement remains among neurologists regarding what behaviors and personality traits should indicate a diagnosis of temporal lobe epilepsy. Three reputable, non-Adventist neurologists were asked to read the manuscript in draft form. Two of the three affirmed the scientific validity of Couperus' thesis and one did not. One positive previewer refused to go on record for practical reasons. The other was not asked to go on record because his earlier published research on the topic is cited substantially in the paper.

The previewer who doubted the author's concluding diagnosis is Dr. Thomas Babb, professor of neurology in residence, UCLA. His letter appears at the beginning of the Currently Posted section of this issue. While his letter may not greatly please Couperus, neither will it bring any joy to the White Estate.

Letters of response — especially from those clinically qualified to judge — will be welcomed both by the author and the publisher. (Boxes quoting M. G. Kellogg ["Kellogg's Diagnosis"] and Arthur White ["Ellen White Autopsy?"] were not submitted as part of this article.)

Ed.

The Significance of Ellen White's Head Injury

by *Molleurus Couperus*

Ellen G. White undoubtedly was one of the most influential individuals in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church — a spiritual leader considered by many to be a prophet. Seventy years have passed since Ellen died in 1915, and it is the purpose of this presentation to reexamine the life and work of this exceptional Christian woman in the light of current knowledge.

Ellen Gould Harmon and her twin sister, Elizabeth, were born November 26, 1827, in Gorham, Maine. Her parents were devout members of the Methodist Episcopal church, as were their eight children. Of Ellen and her family, James White wrote:

Both the parents possessed a large degree of physical endurance, and the children inherited this blessing, as also the activity, force of character, and executive ability which were especially developed in the mother. In Ellen, both mental and physical development were rapid and vigorous. While but a child she displayed a love of study, a quick perception, and a retentive memory. She was of a buoyant, hopeful disposition, fond of society, courageous, resolute, and persevering.¹

It was also stated that "reverence for God, and respect for parental authority, were early and firmly inculcated; and the children were faithfully taught, both by precept and example, those lessons of integrity and diligence which have molded the characters of many of the world's noblest workers." Such traits typified values of devout, nineteenth-century Methodist families.

When the Harmon family became acquainted with William Miller's stirring warning of Christ's imminent return, they accepted his message with deep conviction, finally "coming out" of the Methodist church in 1843.

At the age of nine Ellen was involved in a serious accident that she said affected her whole life.²

In company with my twin sister and one of our schoolmates, I was crossing a common in the city of Portland, Maine, when a girl of about thirteen years of age followed us, threatening to strike us We were running towards home but the girl was following us rapidly, with a stone in her hand. I turned to see how far she was behind me, and as I turned, the stone hit me on my nose. A blinding, stunning sensation overpowered me and I fell senseless. When consciousness again returned, I found myself in a merchant's store; my garments covered with the blood streaming from my nose, and a large stream of blood on the floor. A kind stranger offered to take me home in his carriage. I knew not how weak I was, and told him I should greatly soil his carriage with my blood, and that I could walk home. I had walked but a few rods when I grew dizzy and faint. My twin sister and my schoolmate carried me home. I have no recollection of anything for some time after the accident. My mother says that I noticed nothing, but lay in a stupid state for three weeks As I aroused to consciousness, it seemed to me that I had been asleep. I was not aware of the accident, and knew not of the cause of my sickness I was shocked at the change in my appearance. Every feature of my face seemed changed The bones of my nose proved to be broken.

Ellen states that her father was in Georgia when the accident occurred, and when he finally returned home he did not recognize his daughter. Apparently the physicians who were taking care of her considered repairing the broken bones with silver wires. But they decided against this, according to Ellen, because her recovery was unlikely. It is possible that her physicians attempted to align the broken bones manually, but there seems to be no record of this. After regaining consciousness Ellen was confined to bed for many weeks and "was reduced almost to a skeleton."³ For two years she was unable to breathe through her nose.

Summarizing the essential facts of Ellen's injury from a medical standpoint, one finds the following:

1. At age nine Ellen received a projectile-type blunt injury to the nasal area of the face and fell to the ground.
2. She was immediately unconscious.
3. There was severe and prolonged bleeding, and she was carried to a nearby store.
4. After a brief interval of consciousness she became unconscious again; this lasted for some three weeks.
5. When she regained consciousness she had no recollection of what had taken place.
6. She noticed that her face was markedly deformed at that time.
7. After regaining consciousness she was confined to bed for "many weeks" and was reduced "almost to a skeleton."

The area of the head where Ellen received the impact of the stone thrown at her by a thirteen-year old girl contributed significantly to the severity of the injury that followed. The stone hit Ellen on the nose as she turned her head back to see how near the pursuing girl was, and Ellen fell senseless to the ground. Girgis has observed that the temporal lobe is peculiarly vulnerable to injury because of its location low in the skull behind the eye orbit. There the skull bone is thinnest and puncture wounds can penetrate the brain with relatively little force. Landolt and de Jong also have emphasized the fragility and vulnerability of the temporal area of the skull, one reason that resulting temporal lobe epilepsy is so common.⁴

When a head injury occurs, there is first the danger of the object in motion (in Ellen's case a stone) causing injury to the overlying skin and the structures immediately beneath it, such as blood vessels, nerves, and the underlying bone. Following this is the effect of the impact on the brain itself, which sometimes includes direct destructive action if there is a fracture or a hematoma.

In a so-called closed-head injury (such as Ellen apparently sustained), the force or impact of the flying object through its accelerating effect (a jolt) throws the brain against the opposite side of the skull, causing a diffuse injury to the brain. The head of a person thrown from a speeding vehicle, striking a tree trunk, would be subject to the same acceleration and deceleration injury to the brain. The resulting damage in both cases could be either mild or severe, depending on the force of the impact. Most head injuries in civilian life come from such closed-head injuries. In these injuries the temporal lobe is often more extensively damaged than any other part of the brain.

The long other period of unconsciousness which followed Ellen's head injury, and her later amnesia regarding the incident, indicate the seriousness of her brain injury and explain the delayed results of the accident. For a head injury to produce a coma or unconsciousness lasting some three weeks is not common and usually suggests a severe brain insult. In a report of 105 children who suffered a skull injury followed by a period of unconsciousness, in only 4 patients did this last longer than twenty-four hours. However, patients sustaining head injuries have remained unconscious afterward for three weeks and still survived; but in such cases there are nearly always serious after effects. It may take weeks before recovery starts in such patients and improvement is slow, as it was in Ellen's case. This is associated with a period of confusion and a time of variable loss of memory regarding what took place — a period of amnesia. Such amnesia may be permanent or may gradually improve to a variable degree.

A loss of memory for a period greater than twelve hours following the accident frequently is followed by the development of epilepsy. Epileptic seizures may follow shortly after the accident; or the epilepsy may not manifest itself for many years, sometimes as long as twenty years later. If

the head injury occurs in a child, the time interval before the epilepsy manifests itself is likely to be longer; and the longer this interval, the more likely it is that the epilepsy will persist. Russell considers posttraumatic amnesia lasting more than a few days the result of severe brain damage, including possible tearing and twisting of fiber tracts in the brain.⁵

Cyril B. Courville, then-professor of nervous diseases at Loma Linda University, and a leading authority on head injuries, wrote the following in 1944 regarding some of the effects of head injuries:

... unconsciousness due to application of force to the head may persist for a variable interval, and when uncomplicated is a fairly reliable indication of the degree of force producing the reaction The clinical picture of original coma of short duration following injury to the head with consequent lucid (or semi-lucid) interval, and then relapse into coma is still too often overlooked. It is essential to know that the original period of coma is the result of "concussion". The patient recovers from this experience more or less completely for the causative injury is not usually severe (exception: gross temporal lobe contusion, in which case there is only partial recovery from the deeply comatous state). The relapse into coma is due to increasing intracranial pressure due to accumulating extradural, subdural intracerebral blood clot, to edema of the temporal lobe, to progressive subdural cerebrospinal fluid accumulation, or to progressive softening (and swelling) of the brain following arterial thrombosis.⁶

Courville later stated "that the length of the period of unconsciousness is a fair index to the severity of concussion." He specified that an unconsciousness over a period of more than six hours suggests the possibility "that gross lesions of the brain as well as fractures of the skull may be present. Such patients may survive or die, depending on the severity of these associated symptoms."^{7,8}

Courville also has pointed out that injury to the temporal lobe is the essential cause of psychomotor epilepsy (a type of temporal lobe epilepsy).⁹ In a series of fifty-four clinical cases of psychomotor epilepsy, he found that in thirty-seven percent (twenty cases), injury was the most likely cause.¹⁰ After the recovery from prolonged unconsciousness there usually is only a slow improvement from the amnesia (loss of memory), and only one-third of the patients experience a complete recovery.^{11,12}

Jennett in 1975 stated that "loss of consciousness or even brief amnesia after injury always implied brain damage, . . . But the severity of the diffuse brain damage . . . is best judged by the duration of the post-traumatic amnesia." In a series of 800 cases of head injuries studied by Jennett, some forty percent of those who experienced a posttraumatic amnesia of twenty-four hours or longer, developed late epilepsy.¹³ If Jennett concluded that there was a forty percent likelihood for a patient to develop epilepsy after a head injury resulting in an unconsciousness of twenty-four hours or longer, how much greater would be the chance for Ellen to develop epilepsy if she were unconscious for three weeks and amnesic for the whole accident.

Based on the study of the later results of head injuries in the armed forces, Caveness summarized his findings as follows:

The post-traumatic syndrome, the most common sequelae [result] to develop from craniocerebral trauma, is generally characterized by the following complaints: headache, vertigo and dizziness, nervousness, irritability, impaired memory, inability to concentrate, excessive fatigue, difficulty with sleep . . . Other attributes include a sense of ill health and a reduction in the capacity to earn a livelihood.

Out of a group of 574 patients who had head injuries, 46 percent developed epileptic seizures.¹⁴ The impaired memory, nervousness, inability to concentrate, and excessive fatigue were all symptoms Ellen White had for several years following her head injury. Of all seizures in adults that include "behavioral automatism, personality and thought disorders and visual disturbances", over 50 percent are perhaps due to involvement of the temporal lobe.¹⁶

Jennett in another study of 481 cases of so-called late epilepsy after head injury found that temporal lobe epilepsy developed in ninety cases. He determined that 53 percent of the patients had from one-to-six attacks a year, but 18 percent had more than one a month.¹⁷

Epilepsy as an entity has been recognized to some extent since the

days of ancient Egypt, but it was with Hippocrates (400 B.C.) and Galen (+175 A.D.) that some organized knowledge of this disease began to accumulate. During the nineteenth century a gradual differentiation was made between several kinds of epilepsy beyond the grand mal and petit mal types, and such comparative analyses have continued. It was Hughlings Jackson in England who in 1888 reported on some fifty cases of epilepsy which had as part of their symptom complex a "dreamy state" or "intellectual aura" that preceded generalized attacks, or that occurred without a full attack.¹⁸

There was a steady but slow increase in the knowledge of brain injury and resulting epilepsy during the rest of the nineteenth century. During the two World Wars a large number of head and brain injuries occurred. Many of the injured could be followed closely for a number of years, increasing greatly the knowledge of the late or delayed effects of these injuries. Of the cases in which missile injuries to the head were sustained (in both World Wars and in the Korean War), more than one-third of the victims developed epilepsy. Many head injuries followed by epileptic seizures now result from industrial and traffic accidents.

With the development in 1929 of the electroencephalograph to record the electrical activity of the brain and improved x-ray visualization of the brain and skull (including the CAT scan for variations in anatomical structure, the PET tomography which indicates functional changes in precise areas, and, most recently magnetic resonance imaging [MRI]), a firmer basis for the study and detection of abnormal function and defects of the brain was attained — resulting also in a progressively better understanding of the various types of epilepsy and other cerebral malfunctions.

There are numerous causes for epilepsy, including hereditary predisposition, birth injury, postnatal head injury, meningitis and other infections, tumor, metabolic abnormality, vascular disease, and intoxication. The most common type of epilepsy is temporal lobe epilepsy, and the most common cause for this is head injury.

The Posttraumatic Symptomatology of Ellen G. White After Her Accident

After Ellen Harmon regained consciousness, she was confined to bed for several weeks. She had lost a great deal of weight, probably at least partially due to the difficulty of feeding her during the period of her prolonged coma — no intravenous feeding equipment being available at that time. Fluids put in her mouth might have been swallowed by reflex action, however.

She improved very slowly, and "her health seemed to be completely shattered." Later Ellen was able to attend school but little; and she states that "it was almost impossible for me to study, and retain what I had learned." When she did attend school her hand trembled so much that she could make no progress in her writing; and when studying she says "the letters of my book would run together, large drops of perspiration would stand upon my brow, and I would become dizzy and faint." Her teacher advised her to leave school until her health improved, which she did. Three years later, when she was twelve, she attempted to go to school again; but her health failed once more and she was forced to leave school permanently. This discouraged Ellen greatly. She wrote: "When I pondered over my disappointed hopes, and the thought that I was to be an invalid for life, I was unreconciled to my lot and at times murmured against the providence of God in thus afflicting me."¹⁹ In another account she says: "I seemed to be cut off from all chance of earthly happiness, and doomed to continual disappointment and mortification."²⁰

The symptoms experienced by patients who are recovering from a severe head injury include headaches, dizziness, depression, slowness in thinking, and impairment of concentration and memory — all of which Ellen, by her own account, experienced. Ounsted, in his study of temporal lobe epilepsy in children, concluded that "social and schooling difficulties are widespread among temporal lobe epileptics, even when normal intelligence is present The social and schooling difficulties of children with temporal lobe epilepsy are greater than is commonly thought."²¹

James White stated that at the time of Ellen's first vision, "her nervous condition was such that she could not write, and was dependent on one

sitting near her at the table to even pour her drink from the cup to the saucer.”²²

Ellen, nearly fifty years later reflecting in the *Review and Herald* (November 25, 1884) on the effects of her accident, wrote: “I visited . . . the spot where I met with the accident that had made me a life-long invalid. This misfortune, which for a time seemed so bitter and was so hard to bear, has proved to be a blessing in disguise. The cruel blow which blighted the joys of earth, was the means of turning my eyes to heaven.”

In 1841 Ellen had attended a series of lectures by William Miller, but she felt unready to be accepted by God because of a lack of sanctification. Ellen states that she “settled down in a melancholy state which increased to deep despair.”²³ She remained in this state for three weeks, and in utter hopelessness, would fall upon her face:

I thought that the fate of the condemned sinner would be mine . . . Many times the wish arose that I had never been born. Total darkness settled upon me and there seemed no way out of the shadows . . . I have since thought that many inmates of the lunatic asylums were brought there by experiences similar to my own.²⁴

At this time, and in this state of mind, Ellen had a significant dream that was probably the first of her many recorded visionary experiences. In this dream she saw a temple supported by a large pillar to which a bleeding lamb was tied. Fear came over Ellen while near the lamb, and she felt a sense of shame when she saw that she must confess her sins before those who had already done so and who seemed happy and expecting a joyful event. Then a trumpet sounded, the building shook, and the saints shouted in triumph. The temple then shone with awful brightness, followed by a terrible darkness in which Ellen found herself alone. She wrote: “The horror of my mind could not be described. I awoke, and it was some time before I could convince myself it was not a reality. Surely, I thought, my doom is fixed.”²⁵

Shortly afterward she had another dream in which she thought she was sitting in deep despair when “a person of beautiful form and countenance” asked her if she wished to see Jesus, and if so, to follow him. She was led to a steep stairway and was told to keep her eyes fixed upwards; for if she would look down, she would become dizzy and fall. She saw that some indeed fell on the way. Then she saw Jesus, and “she tried to shield herself from his piercing gaze.” But Jesus laid His hand upon her head and said: “Fear not.” Ellen fell prostrate at His feet and saw scenes of glory and beauty, while Jesus smiled upon her. The guide then brought her back to the stairs, giving her a green cord with which she could come in contact with Jesus when she so desired.²⁶

Certain features of this vision suggest that it may have been a temporal lobe seizure. First, the circumstances must be remembered. Ellen was discouraged, feeling that she was not ready to be accepted by Christ because of a lack of sanctification, and in deep despair. Her dream probably was conditioned by her emotional state and the specific problems that were troubling her. She felt fear in the dream when she came near to the lamb, and later saw the awful brightness and then the terrible darkness that followed, in which she was alone. All of these (fear, bright light, and darkness) are frequently experienced in temporal lobe seizures, as they were in many of Ellen’s visions.²⁷

In her second recorded dream (1842) she was told to keep her eyes fixed upwards. Jesus looked at her with piercing gaze, but then told her, “Fear not.” Fear apparently was part of this experience also, and her eyes were fixed upwards — both of which are typical factors in temporal lobe epileptic seizures.²⁸

There are obvious similarities between this dream and the much longer vision which she experienced in December 1844. Soon after her second dream (mentioned in the previous paragraph), Ellen had another experience while participating in a prayer meeting:

As I prayed . . . everything was shut out from me but Jesus and glory, and I knew nothing of what was passing around me. I remained in this state a long time, and when I realized what was around me, everything looked glorious and new, as if smiling and praising God.

In the account in *Early Writings* she added: “Wave after wave of glory rolled over me, until my body grew stiff.”²⁹ This would seem to be her third recorded visionary experience. Ellen participated in the

disappointment of the Millerite Adventists, when Jesus did not return in the spring of 1843, and in the still greater disillusionment of October 22, 1844, when again He did not appear.

It was in December of 1844 that Ellen experienced a vision while kneeling in prayer together with four other women at the home of a friend. In this vision she saw the journey of the 144,000 saints on a narrow winding path; some fell down into the dark and wicked world below. Then followed a statement which has given rise to considerable controversy in her church:

It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the city, as all the wicked world which God had rejected. They fell all the way along the path one after another, until we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus’ coming.

Together with most of the little group that later formed the Seventh-day Adventist church, she believed, for several years after October 22, 1844, that probation was closed.³⁰

A week later Ellen experienced another vision in which she saw the trials and oppositions she would pass through in her work of relating her visions to others. Following this she again entered a period of despair because she had no means to support herself in such a ministry; she “coveted death.”

During a prayer session in her father’s home with friends, she suddenly felt as if a ball of fire had struck her over the heart; she fell to the floor and heard a holy being say, “Make known to others what I have revealed to you.”³¹ After this Ellen Harmon was faithful to the vision and became increasingly active in speaking to small groups of those who had believed the second advent message of Christ’s soon return. On August 30, 1846, she was married to Elder James White, with whom she then worked for the scattered Adventist companies. Writing, publishing, and traveling became a mode of living for the Whites.

“The stone hit me on my nose . . . and I fell senseless . . . I have no recollection of anything . . . but lay in a stupor for three weeks.”

Ellen continued to have many so-called “open visions” during waking hours in the period from 1844 to 1884; after that she had primarily prophetic dreams, or night-visions, until her death on March 3, 1915. It is impossible, of course, to obtain an accurate account of the total number of visionary experiences Ellen White had, but James White claimed that by 1868 she had experienced between 100 and 200 visions.³² Between 1868 and 1884 there are some eighty additional visions listed; and nearly sixty prophetic dreams after 1884 are enumerated in the *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*, besides forty-eight which are classified as of uncertain date. Arthur White has stated that “no complete record was preserved of all the visions given Ellen Harmon in the weeks and months succeeding the first revelation. Contemporary documents indicate that the revelations of those early days were frequent.”³³ It would seem from all this that Ellen had at least 400 lifetime visionary experiences, and perhaps many more.

How was Ellen Harmon persuaded that the visionary experiences and dreams she had had come directly from God? First, probably, was the nature of what she saw — scenes of heaven in which she spoke with angels, spoke with Christ, and saw God. She believed she was receiving important messages and warnings from heaven. Perhaps more crucial in the beginning was the influence of those who were close to her, who believed that her experiences or trances were the workings of God. After her second dream in 1841 she confided to her mother the struggles she was going through. Her mother was sympathetic and encouraged her to visit Elder Stockman. Ellen records:

Upon hearing my story, he placed his hand affectionately upon my head, saying with tears in his eyes: “Ellen, you are only a child. Yours is a most singular experience for one of your tender age. Jesus must be preparing you for some special work.”³⁴

Ellen’s first public prayer was such an emotional experience for her that she lost consciousness of what was going on around her.

When I was struck down, some of those present were greatly alarmed and were about to run for a physician, thinking that

some sudden and dangerous indisposition had attacked me; but my mother bade them let me alone, for it was plain to her, and to the other experienced Christians, that it was the wondrous power of God that had prostrated me.³⁵

Ellen was deeply impressed by the religious and emotional excitement of her local Methodist congregation, including the trances and the fainting.³⁶ She found support for her belief in the divine origin of her visions also from James White and Joseph Bates.³⁷ During the middle of the nineteenth century, there were others in the Adventist faith community who were claiming, or who were recognized as having, visions from God. Ellen mentions a number of these in autobiographical sketches.³⁸

There is no question that Ellen White claimed, and no doubt came to believe firmly, that she received visions and messages directly from God. Today one may wonder why Ellen White was so easily accepted by others as a prophetess. During that period of history, prophets and prophetesses were rather common both in England and America. At this time Joseph Smith was accepted as a prophet, and Mormon missionaries claimed that their church had “the spirit of prophecy.” Mary Baker Eddy, also a contemporary of Ellen White’s, became the founder and spiritual leader of the Christian Scientists. Billington has pointed out that between 1830 and 1850, “women preachers were popular. Visions and trances were easily accepted.”³⁹

Arthur White, Ellen’s grandson, agrees that the physical manifestations of Ellen’s visionary experiences — unusual and unexplained as they were to that generation — contributed to their acceptance as being of supernatural origin. “The very manner in which the visions were given was one strong evidence, among many, which settled the matter in the minds of most eye witnesses.”⁴⁰

There was a period early in the ministry of Ellen White in which her acceptance rather than unanimous was quite probationary in nature; she certainly was not seen as an authority. In 1851 James White wrote in the *Review and Herald* (April 21, 1851):

Every Christian is, therefore, in duty bound to take the Bible as a perfect rule of faith and duty He is not at liberty to turn from them [the Scriptures] to learn his duty through any of the gifts. We say that the very moment he does, he places the gifts in the wrong place, and takes an extremely dangerous position.

In the same issue of the *Review* he added:

God’s Word is an ever-lasting rock. On that we can stand with confidence at all time. *Though the Lord gives dreams, designed generally for the individuals who have them*, to comfort, correct, or to instruct in extreme trials or dangers, yet to suppose that he designs to guide in general duties by dreams, is unscriptural, and very dangerous.

Four years later James White wrote the following:

There is a class of persons who are determined that the *Review* and its conductors make the view of Mrs. White a test of doctrine and Christian fellowship What has the *Review* to do with Mrs. W.’s views? The sentiments published in its columns are all drawn from the Holy Scriptures. No writer of the *Review* has ever referred to them as authority on any point.⁴¹

Twenty-eight years later (in 1883), Elder G. I. Butler, then-president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, wrote the following:

Our enemies try very hard to make it appear that we make the visions a test of fellowship. It would be most absurd and impossible to do so, even if we would do it. With people in all parts of the world embracing our views who never saw Sister White or heard of her, how could we make them a test of fellowship? . . . They claim that there are many among us who do not believe the visions. This is true; yet these are in our churches, and are not disfellowshipped. They have claimed . . . that Elders Smith, Canright, and Gage did not believe the visions; yet all of them are members of our churches, two of them hold credentials as ministers, and one of them holds very important offices No, we do not make the visions a test, and never have.⁴²

Neal Wilson, current president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, expressed basically the same attitude in an interview recently.

When we come to the point as to whether one has to believe in Ellen White, to some degree or another, or accept her visions as real, or simply an imagination or parroting what somebody else said — that one has to believe that these things were real visions in order to be a Seventh-day Adventist or to experience salvation — this church has never taken this position. I hope it never does, it would do great violence to the gift of God the church has been given. It was never intended for that purpose at all.”⁴³

As time went on, Ellen White was more and more accepted in the Seventh-day Adventist church as a person with authority; and her influence became that of a real prophet, even though she herself refused to call herself one — preferring the title “the Lord’s Messenger.” She believed that her work included “*much more than the word ‘prophet’ signifies.*”⁴⁴

What she really believed about the importance of, and divine involvement in, her work is clear by the following statements:

The *Testimonies* are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil. In arraying yourself against the servants of God you are doing a work either for God or for the devil.⁴⁵

If you seek to turn aside the counsel of God to suit yourselves, if you lessen the confidence of God’s people in the testimonies He has sent them, you are rebelling against God as certainly as we were Korah, Dathan, and Abiram In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision — the precious rays of light shining from the throne. It is true concerning the articles in our papers and in the many volumes of my books.^{46,47}

Why did Ellen come to these conclusions regarding the nature and significance of her work? Perhaps it was a gradual process, primarily due to the influence and pressure of all those around her who believed that her visionary experiences must be of supernatural, divine origin. This process started with her first dreams and continued until her last vision. It is quite understandable that Ellen became fully persuaded that these dreams and visions were all direct, divine revelations so that she could finally say (and believe): “In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouths of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the *Testimonies* of His Spirit.”⁴⁸

However, during Ellen’s lifetime there were those who questioned the divine origin of her visions. James White in 1847 published a letter from “a beloved brother” regarding Ellen’s visions.

I cannot endorse sister Ellen’s visions as being of divine inspiration, as you and she think them to be; yet I do not suspect the least shade of dishonesty in either of you in this matter I think that what she and you regard as visions from the Lord, are only religious reveries, in which her imagination runs without control upon themes in which she is most deeply interested. While so absorbed in these reveries, she is lost to everything around her. Reveries are of two kinds, sinful and religious. Hers is the latter.⁴⁹

Others suggest mental or physical causes. Ellen mentions mesmerism (a form of hypnotism) as being claimed as a cause or explanation for her visions. This possibility even suggested itself to her.⁵⁰

Another explanation given for her visions was hysteria, and this suggestion was repeated throughout her life. It is interesting that Ellen diagnosed one of her fellow church members as suffering from hysteria. She wrote:

Dear Sister F., you have a diseased imagination You are doing positive injury, not only to yourself, but to the other members of your family, and — especially your mother Her mind is becoming unbalanced by the frequent fits of hysteria which she is compelled to witness.⁵¹

There were early coworkers with Ellen and James who rejected the supernatural origin of Ellen’s visions. Among these was Isaac Wellcome, who was baptized by James White in 1844 and was active in the Second Advent Movement. He wrote:

Ellen G. Harmon . . . was strangely exercised in body and mind . . . falling to the floor . . . (we remember catching her twice to save her from falling upon the floor) . . . in meetings she would

speak with great vehemence and rapidity until falling down, when, as she claimed, wonderful views of heaven and what was being transacted there were shown her. She claimed to have seen that Christ had left the office of mediation and assumed that of Judge, had closed the door of mercy, and was blotting out the names, from the book of life . . . We saw her at Poland, Portland, Topsham, and Brunswick during the beginning of this career, and often heard her speak, and several times saw her fall, and heard her relate wonders which she said her heavenly Father permitted her to see. Her supernatural or abnormal views were not readily understood as visions, but as spiritual views of unseen things, which were quite common among the Methodists . . . These visions were but the echoes of Elder [Joseph] Turner and others' preaching, and we regarded them as the product of the over-excited imagination of her mind, and not as facts.⁵²

Jacob Brinkerhoff and his brother W. H. Brinkerhoff (who was ordained by James White), were active in the work of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the 1860-65 period. Jacob wrote in 1884:

Mrs. White is in high repute among them as a leader . . . partly by her claim to divine inspiration. Shortly after the disappointment in 1844, she had what is called her first vision. Those were trying times to the faith of the Advent people, no doubt; and she was very young at the time, and in very poor health . . . In the excitement of the time, and while in this weak condition of the body, her mind seemed to depart from her body, in trance, in which the mind continues to be active, and forms conceptions from preconceived opinions, from the excitement of the occasion,

M. G. Kellogg's Diagnosis

Dr. M. G. Kellogg wrote this assessment of Ellen White's visions in a 3 June 1906 letter to his younger brother, John Harvey Kellogg:

In 1868, after talking with Dr. Trall, I began to suspect that Mrs. White's visions might not be what we had thereunto supposed them to be, and from that time onward I have been studying both Mrs. White and her visions, dreams, and testimonies . . .

I have seen Mrs. White when in vision quite a number of times between 1852 and 1859, in every instance she was simply in a state of catalepsy. In each instance she was suddenly seized, fell unconscious, and remained unconscious during the full time the fit lasted; every vital function was reduced to the lowest point compatible with life; pulse almost stopped and very infrequent breathing so slight as to be imperceptible except when she uttered short sentences; pupils dilated to great width, sense of hearing blunted; in fact all her senses so blunted that she could neither see, feel, nor hear; in fact was wholly unconscious, yet her mind was acutely active, the action being automatic and wholly involuntary, the whole vision being a conglomerated mental rehearsal of previous conceptions, scenes, meditations, and suggestions so vividly reproduced on her mind as to be to her a living reality. Catalepsy assumes many forms in its various victims, but in her case some phase of all forms was produced. I have seen many cases. Mrs. L. M. Hall's description of Mrs. W's condition in vision agrees with mine.

or from surrounding circumstances. At that time the experience of the Advent people was the theme of interest among them, and in her vision or trance her mind went forward on the same subject as a natural consequence . . . We do not wonder that her visions were considered by her and by those whom she associated with as revelations from the Lord. Such phenomena in nature do not often occur; and at a time when various fanaticism[s] were attributed to the work of God, it is not surprising that this should have been. Being wholly absorbed in her religious views and experience, her mind, while in a trance state, would operate in the same direction while she was in a state of insensibility. A trance is a state of insensibility; catalepsy; ecstasy . . . Those at all acquainted with the history of Mrs. White's visions have read that a principal claim for her divine inspiration is that she is perfectly

insensible; but it only corroborates the position we take that they are only produced by an unhealthy and unnatural state of her body and mind.⁵³

It almost reads as if Brinkerhoff was going to call it temporal lobe epilepsy. But he stopped short of that; the term had not yet been coined. A little later in his paper he adds: "They overlook the fact that they (the visions) may be inspired by neither God or Satan, but may be only human, or from her own mind, which position we hold to be true as to their source."

Dudley Canright in 1887 named her head injury as the cause of her visions:

At the age of nine she received a terrible blow on the face, which broke her nose and nearly killed her. She was unconscious for three weeks. This shock to her nervous system was the real cause of all the visions she afterwards had."⁵²

In 1919 he specifically suggested epilepsy as the cause. It is significant that all the symptomatic diagnoses applied during her lifetime to her visionary experiences are covered by the then-unknown entity of temporal lobe epilepsy.⁵⁴

Dr. William Sadler, who was well acquainted with Ellen White, wrote in 1912:

It is not uncommon for persons in a cataleptic trance to imagine themselves taking trips to other worlds. In fact, the wonderful accounts of their experiences, which they write out after these cataleptic attacks are over, are so unique and marvelous as to serve as the basis for founding new sects, cults, and religions . . . It is an interesting study in psychology to note that these trance mediums always see visions in harmony with their theological beliefs . . . Nearly all these victims of trances and nervous catalepsy, sooner or later come to believe themselves to be messengers of God and prophets of Heaven: and no doubt most of them are sincere in this belief. Not understanding the physiology and psychology of their afflictions, they sincerely come to look upon their peculiar mental experiences as something supernatural, while their followers blindly believe anything they teach because of the supposed divine character of these so-called revelations.⁵⁵

Sadler had written to Ellen in 1906 a nine-page letter as an answer to her invitation that anyone who had "perplexities and grievous things on their mind regarding the testimonies that I have born, to specify what their objections and criticisms are."⁵⁶ Arthur L. White has published extracts from Sadler's long letter, listing the questions asked by Sadler.

Dr. Gregory Holmes and Dr. Delbert Hodder presented a paper entitled "Ellen G. White and the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Visions or Partial Complex Seizures?" at the American Academy of Neurology meeting in Toronto in May 1981. The paper was summarized in the *Journal of Neurology* as follows:

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church was born in the period following the "Great Disappointment" of 1844. The principal figure in the formation of this major Protestant denomination was Ellen G. White. Her 100,000 pages of writing are second only to the Bible in determining church doctrine for millions of members throughout the world. Ellen White was considered to be a "Prophet of God" who received instructions and guidance through supernatural visions which continue to provide evidence to most Adventists of her divine inspiration.

At age 9 Ellen White sustained a severe head injury. Following recovery her personality changed and she became introspective, extremely moralistic, and religious, and developed into a prolific reader and writer. At age 17 Ellen White had her first "spell" which was interpreted by her as a "vision." The visions were characterized by occasional auras, an altered state of consciousness with staring or eye-rolling, gestural automatisms, perseveration of speech, visual and auditory hallucinations, and postvision lethargy and amnesia for events occurring during the vision.

Based on the history of head trauma, personality changes, and descriptions of the visions, we suggest that Ellen White had partial complex seizures.⁵⁷

The paper was also reported in the *Toronto Star* on May 23, 1981; and a version was published by Hodder in *Evangelica*, November 1981.

Partial complex seizures are typical of one form of epilepsy, which involves the limbic system of the brain, including the temporal lobes. There was a time when most people believed that epilepsy meant muscle spasms and convulsions with probable frothing at the mouth and biting of the tongue. This kind of epilepsy does indeed occur, but there are also other types of epilepsy. All forms of epilepsy are due to malfunction of nerve cells in the brain. Such malfunction may cause abnormal reactions in muscle activity in large areas of the body, but there are many other systems and functions that may be affected, especially in temporal lobe epilepsy. These include endocrine functions, heart rate, respiration, consciousness, thoughts, memory, dreams, speech, writing, mood, behavior, temper, sexuality, and others.

The specific symptoms which an epileptic patient will manifest depend on the location of the damaged neurons (including in which half of the brain), the severity and extent of the damage to the involved nerve cells, and what other distant neurons are influenced by the malfunction of the primary focus in the brain. The symptoms resulting from the original brain damage may not become evident for many years.⁵⁸ This delay may be due to the final effects of the prolonged process of tissue changes following the brain injury. Courville⁵⁹ quotes Earl et al, reporting that in 31.2 percent of clinical cases of psychomotor epilepsy there was a history of postnatal craniocerebral injury. Gomes,⁶⁰ who analyzed 3,636 cases of temporal lobe epilepsy, was able to ascertain the etiology [cause] in 64 percent of the patients. Of these, injury was the cause in 38 percent of the cases.

Epileptic seizures occur periodically, but their frequency may vary greatly. Seizures may also be precipitated by internal and external factors, such as anxiety, depression, fatigue, and sleep; and in some types of epilepsy it is possible for patients to trigger an attack by hyperventilating (intentionally or during stress), by blinking at bright lights, by hearing a sudden loud noise, by pressure on the carotid arteries in the neck, and even in some individuals by reading. Some patients may have a premonition that a seizure is coming, and it is sometimes possible for a patient to abort the seizure. Ellen was able to resist the coming of a vision at least once and was unable to speak following this for nearly twenty-four hours.⁶¹ Ellen was unaware of her surroundings during a vision and was later amnesic about what had taken place around her during the vision; yet she was able to recall what she had seen and experienced in the vision itself. This is typical of a partial complex seizure in temporal lobe epilepsy.

It was claimed that Ellen did not breathe during her visions; yet she never became cyanotic. (But she frequently did speak while in vision—an activity for which she needed air.) George I. Butler in 1874 supported this when he said her “face retains its natural color, and blood circulates as usual.” In the more detailed reports of Ellen’s visions, it has been noted that when she came out of a vision she experienced “a deep inhalation, followed in about a minute by another, and very soon natural breathing was resumed.” Ellen’s breathing may well have been almost imperceptible. Because of the reduction in normal breathing, it is not strange that some of those present concluded that Ellen was not breathing at all.⁶² It has been reported in temporal lobe epilepsy that respiration may actually be arrested for brief periods (apnea), and slowed down following this. Lennox lists among the symptoms of psychomotor seizures the fact that breathing in these patients may vary from hyperventilation to apnea (absence of breathing). Total absence of breathing could continue only a very short time, but almost imperceptible breathing could last for long periods.⁶³ At times this apparent “not-breathing” during visions was put forward as a proof that Ellen’s visions must be of supernatural origin.

Automatism (automatic actions of which the patient is not conscious) is a common symptom in temporal lobe epilepsy. And Ellen manifested this by wringing her hands; having slow graceful movements of the shoulders, arms, and hands; and walking back and forth while in vision. This peripatetic manifestation seems significant since the most remarkable feats of automatism in temporal lobe epileptics have been in this area.

In 1888 Hughlings-Jackson reported fifty cases of epilepsy that manifested an aura or dreamy state, including some rather extreme examples of automatism. These happened to a physician who was a patient of Jackson’s. In one of his experiences he was traveling on a

commuter train and was to get off at the fourth station. He remembered passing the second station, but the next thing he knew he was standing on the door steps of his house, fumbling for his door key. He had left the train at the correct station, turned in his ticket at the gate, walked half a mile, and crossed streets to his house—none of which he recalled. It had been an automatic behavior for which he was amnesic.⁶⁴ Interestingly, another of Jackson’s patients referred to his seizure experiences as “visions”. Sleepwalkers may open doors and climb stairs safely but not remember their actions; it is an automatism.

What did those who were present during Ellen’s visions actually observe? Fortunately, there are available a number of fairly detailed reports by some who were present when Ellen was involved in one of her visionary experiences, including James White and J. N. Loughborough, who claimed to have seen her in vision about fifty times. Arthur L. White has given us a comprehensive summary of the accounts of these eye witnesses:

1. Immediately preceding a vision, there was a deep sensing of the presence of God both by Mrs. White and by others in the room.
2. As the vision began, Mrs. White uttered an exclamation of ‘Glory!’ or ‘Glory to God!’ at times repeated.
3. There was a loss of physical strength.
4. Supernatural strength was then apparent.
5. There was no breathing, but the heart beat continued normally, and the color in the cheeks was natural. The most critical tests failed to reveal any disturbance of the circulatory system.
6. Occasionally there would be exclamations indicative of the scene being presented.
7. The eyes were open, not with a vacant stare, but as if she were intently watching something.
8. The position might vary. At times she was seated; at times reclining; at times she walked about the room and made graceful gestures as she spoke of matters presented.
9. There was absolute unconsciousness of what was occurring about her. She neither saw, heard, felt, nor perceived in any way the immediate surroundings or happenings.
10. The close of the vision was indicated by a deep inhalation, followed in about a minute by another, and very soon natural breathing was resumed.
11. Immediately after the vision all seemed very dark.
12. Within a short time natural strength and abilities were regained.”^{65,66}

Loughborough also reports on an 1846 vision that Ellen Harmon experienced in the presence of Joseph Bates. In this she spoke about what seemed to be planets. Mrs. Truesdale, who was present at this meeting, is quoted by Loughborough:

We soon noticed that she was insensible to earthly things . . . After counting aloud the moons of Jupiter, and soon after those of Saturn, she gave a beautiful description of the rings of the latter. She then said, “The inhabitants are a tall, majestic people, so unlike the inhabitants of earth. Sin has never entered here.”⁶⁷ Ellen also reports on her planetary vision in *Early Writings*, where she saw Enoch among the inhabitants of one of the planets.⁶⁸

In further discussing what Ellen White said she experienced in her first vision, Arthur White adds a very clear picture of the essential features of her experience, and summarizes them as follows:

Thus it is clear that it seemed to her she was seeing, feeling, hearing, obeying, and acting, employing her ordinary faculties, while in reality she was not; but it was in this vivid way, seemingly through the utilization of the ordinary organs of sense, that the truths and information were forcefully impressed upon her mind. This she later related or wrote out in her own words.^{69,70}

When the extant records of the details of Ellen G. White’s visions are compared with the symptoms of partial complex seizures in temporal lobe epilepsy, a striking similarity is discovered. Daly⁷¹ mentions that complex partial seizures consist in an alteration in the *content* of consciousness . . . the hallucinations of complex partial seizures

are 'formed,' in the sense that they constitute a fully developed recognizable sensory experience which in rare instances may, in fact, be the memory of an actual experience. An important point in the nature of this altered content of consciousness is that it constitutes an intrusion upon the patient's on-flowing stream of awareness No matter how vivid, complex, or 'real' the ictal [seizure] experience, the patient recognizes that it is an experience *imposed upon* him. His consciousness is 'split,' and he can still remain the objective observer, the bystander witnessing these curious events.

The seizure experience is usually initiated by a so-called signal symptom, or aura, that often involves some epigastric sensations or other automatic manifestations. There may be a sense of fear or the hallucination of smelling something, which Ellen White experienced a number of times as the smell of roses, or simply "flowers." She smelled the fragrance of violets, and at another time she was "gathering the flowers and enjoying their fragrance."⁷² At another time

she knelt by the bed, and before the first word of petition had been offered she felt that the room was filled with the fragrance of roses. Looking up to see whence the fragrance came she saw the room flooded with a soft, silvery light.⁷³

Arthur White, when describing a visionary experience of Ellen in 1901 in which there was "a sweet fragrance, as of beautiful flowers," added: "She knew what it meant." Apparently it was a frequent part of Ellen's visions to notice this fragrance. She also often saw a bright light at the beginning of her visions, a light that would flood the room, or would appear in various intensities, colors, and shapes. The seeing of bright lights and various colors is very common in the partial complex seizures of epileptics. Ellen has stated:

Well, while I was praying and sending up my petition, there was, as has been a hundred times or more, a soft light circling around in the room, and a fragrance like the fragrance of flowers, of a beautiful scent of flowers.⁷⁴

If one takes seriously the statement "a hundred times or more", the circling light and the fragrance of flowers must have been present in nearly every vision. The hallucination of music (also associated with bright light) was present in Ellen's experiences,⁷⁵ as it is also found in the seizures of temporal lobe epilepsy.

The main event in Ellen's visions is also comparable to what occurs in partial complex seizures, be they brief or long. Williams has summarized the basic features of these seizures as follows:

all recognition, however simple, is based upon memory, as is all movement, and there is simply an increasing complex pattern of the use of past experiences, from the recognition of the simplest visual or auditory form to the intellectual handling of an elaborate perceptual event.⁷⁶

Gastaut observed that the thoughts that occupied the mind of the patient before the seizure might well become the subject of the seizure itself.⁷⁷ Such was the case, apparently, in Ellen's visions frequently, perhaps always.

Gloor et al, in 1982, when discussing the results of brain stimulations in their patients with temporal lobe epilepsy, expressed themselves similarly: The idea that

stimulating 'whom' seems more important than stimulating 'where' in the limbic system becomes understandable, because the responses reflect *at the same time* the functional role of the stimulated area *and* the patient's past individual experience.⁷⁸

Prolonged Visions

Lennox has pointed out that seizures lasting several hours might occur once or twice a year; and that the more frequent the seizures are, the more likely that they will be of short duration.⁷⁹ Partial complex seizures usually last from only a few seconds to several minutes, but may also last hours and, rarely, days. Arthur White stated regarding the duration of Ellen's visions:

While some of the visions were very extended in their nature, at times lasting more than an hour, and on one occasion four hours, there were other times when the visions were very brief . . . only a few minutes, or in some cases, seconds.⁸⁰

Temporal lobe epileptic seizures which are prolonged and last even

for days, can be classified as partial complex status epilepticus. Such prolonged seizures may actually consist of many short ones occurring in such rapid succession that they appear to be one, especially to an untrained observer. It is also possible to have a long-lasting period of mental confusion following a seizure, which again may appear as a continuation of the seizure. If more details were known about Ellen White's three-and four-hour visions, a definitive diagnosis of them might responsibly be made.⁸¹

When a partial complex seizure ends, the patient may pass through a brief period of exhaustion and some automatism, for all of which the patient is later amnesic. Gradually self-awareness and consciousness return; this was also Ellen's experience. If the vision was to be written out, it could not be done until the individual had recovered from the seizure. And when writing out the vision, the fully conscious patient could also interpret the vision, adding to or subtracting from it. With a compulsion to write, such an account could become extensive indeed.

Most patients with status epilepticus suffer from the convulsive type, but some 25 percent to 30 percent have partial complex seizures which are nonconvulsive. In this latter group "no evidence of permanent intellectual deterioration has yet been reported."^{82,83,84} Convulsive, generalized status epilepticus is seen in grand mal epilepsy, while in the complex partial variety it is rare.

The point has recently been made that if a patient experiences a prolonged attack of status epilepticus, this will result in a definite serious deterioration of the mental capacities. Therefore Ellen White could not have been an epileptic. This argument is based on a misunderstanding of the difference between convulsive epilepsy (such as grand mal) and a nonconvulsive type (such as temporal lobe epilepsy).

Status epilepticus of the convulsive type is indeed threatening not only because of its deteriorating effect on the intellectual capacities of the patient, but because the prolonged rapid muscle contractions produce serious complex metabolic disturbances that endanger life itself.⁸⁵ So serious are such prolonged convulsive epileptic attacks that they must be terminated as soon as possible by injections of strong sedating medication in order to prevent brain damage. Ellen experienced none of these consequences from her prolonged visions because her seizures were nonconvulsive and of the partial complex type.

Temporal Lobe Epileptic Seizures

Penfield has described the function of the temporal lobe as having to do with "the interpretation of present experiences in the light of past experiences." Further the temporal lobe contains a "sequential record of consciousness, a record that has been laid down during the patient's earlier experience." In 1933 Penfield discovered that when he electrically stimulated certain groups of nerve cells in the temporal lobe, the patient would "relive" — as in a moving picture or a "flashback" — what had been experienced in one way or another earlier in life. In other words, the temporal lobe system records all the experiences that a particular person has had; and even if it is beyond the direct recall of the individual (forgotten), it is still recorded and can be brought back to consciousness by artificial electrical stimulation or by an electrical discharge in the brain during an epileptic seizure.^{86,87} The results of these experiments substantiated what had been suggested by Jackson and others long before — that the brain stores permanently our past experiences, which are subject to recall. This recalling of past events, thoughts, and impressions is the basis of what patients experience in partial complex seizures.⁸⁸

Various terms have been used in the past for what is covered by the term temporal lobe epilepsy. One of these was psychomotor epilepsy; but the World Health Organization adopted the general designation of temporal lobe epilepsy for this disease, and the more limited terms of temporal lobe partial seizures and partial complex seizures for specific types of temporal lobe seizures that are very different from those of generalized or grand mal epilepsy.

The symptoms of temporal lobe epilepsy are many, and they can be divided into those associated with the seizures themselves (called ictal) and those between seizures (interictal).

The beginning of a seizure in temporal lobe epilepsy usually manifests itself by the patient suddenly stopping whatever he or she is doing. There may then follow an interval of automatism such as lip smacking, hand

wringing, walking, or other behaviors that the patient will not remember. A patient may even continue to turn the pages of a book as Ellen did.⁸⁹ The patient may also experience olfactory hallucinations of flowers or ill-smelling substances. This is followed by "cognitive complex temporal lobe experiences" that Wilder Penfield called "flashbacks" ("playbacks"), "psychical hallucinations," or "experiential seizures."⁹⁰ "These involve hallucinations of past experience, and reactivation of the stream of consciousness."^{91,92}

"Penfield points out that the epileptic is having the double experience of a re-creation of the past with the consciousness of the present time during the experiential hallucination. The psychosensory hallucination deriving from the temporal lobes can involve any of the sensory modalities or combination thereof, namely visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, vestibular, tactile or the 'indescribable' hallucinations described by Williams."^{93,94}

During the seizure the patient may be sitting, lying down, or even walking and singing, while being totally unaware of what is going on around him. During the seizure the patient may experience joy, elation, depression, and often fear — as Ellen White did in her visions. Automatism may be present again at the very end of the seizure, and the completion of the seizure is marked by the patient beginning to respond to questions and commands. Some patients will have a period of varying degrees of confusion following the end of the seizure, the so-called postictal phase. Patients most often will remember what they experienced or saw during the seizure, but not what went on around them.⁹⁵

Some complex partial seizures are reported to start with a motionless stare, others with motion and staring, and a third type with a "drop attack."

Dreifuss has stated: "The objectivity with which patients with complex partial seizures can describe their hallucinations is an extremely important diagnostic point."⁹⁶

"A loss of memory for a period greater than 12 hours following the accident frequently is followed by the development of epilepsy."

The thoughts in a partial complex seizure may be called ideational, involving thoughts on which the patient has dwelled previously and on which he perseverates. These ideas may be repeated in many attacks. "Its content may be personal, metaphysical, or even transcendental (of death, eternity), or it may be quite objective (fixation on the ideational content of a sentence read or heard at the start of the seizure)."⁹⁷

Behavioral Symptoms in Temporal Lobe Epilepsy

It has been known for more than a century that patients afflicted with temporal lobe epilepsy are likely to manifest psychic abnormalities. Many of these abnormalities are no doubt due to the specific brain lesion, but some are due perhaps to the social and emotional effects produced by being an epileptic. Landolt points out that as early as 1938 it was reported that as many as 50 percent of temporal lobe epileptics were afflicted with psychic disturbances.

Patients who suffer from temporal lobe epilepsy may also manifest specific symptoms between seizures. These symptoms are classified as interictal (between seizures) and indicate a state of behavioral activity which is part of the epilepsy and is due to pathological changes in the temporal lobe limbic system. These behavioral symptoms have been cataloged over a period of years by many clinical observers. Waxman and Geschwind in 1975 published a paper entitled *The Interictal Behavior Syndrome of Temporal Lobe Epilepsy*,⁹⁹ in which they described alterations in patients' sexual behavior and religiosity, and a tendency toward extensive, compulsive writing.

During recent years several epileptologists have published lists of these symptoms. These were summarized by Bear and Fedio (1977) and by Bear (1979),¹⁰⁰ and include a deepening of emotions, euphoria, sadness, anger, hostility, hyposexuality, guilt, argumentiveness, hypermoralism, compulsivity, viscosity (stickiness, tendency to be repetitive), sense of personal significance and destiny, multiple conversions, deep and often idiosyncratic religious beliefs, interest in philosophical, moral or cosmological speculations, humorlessness, a sense of dependence and

passivity (cosmic helplessness), paranoia (suspiciousness, overinterpretation of motives and events), and hypergraphia¹⁰¹ [see box].

Not all workers in epileptology are yet fully convinced that all the symptoms listed by Bear and Fedio are found only in temporal lobe epilepsy. Hermann and Riel in 1981 discussed whether these symptoms were specific for temporal lobe epilepsy, or if they might also be found in other types of epilepsy. They concluded: "Four traits (sense of personal destiny, dependence, paranoia, philosophical interest) were significantly elevated in the TLE [temporal lobe epilepsy] group, thus lending some support to the notion of changes in behavior and thought which occur in TLE but not necessarily in other forms of epilepsy." The other traits mentioned by Bear and Fedio were found both in patients suffering from temporal lobe epilepsy and in those with generalized epileptic seizures.¹⁰²

Blumer has stated that behavioral and personality changes begin about two years after the onset of seizures, and are "associated with chronic excessive neuronal discharge in the mesial temporal lobes and adjoining areas." He mentions that emotionality, hyposexuality, and mood changes are the three major character changes, and that the patient's religiosity may become "awkward or intrusive to others."¹⁰³

Geschwind (1979)¹⁰⁴ noted that *the increased concern of temporal lobe epileptics with philosophical, moral, or religious issues is often in striking contrast to their educational background*. Geschwind¹⁰⁵ had suggested in 1977 that "the personality changes in temporal lobe epilepsy may in some sense be the single most important condition in psychiatry." However, neither Geschwind nor anyone else has claimed that these characteristics are found only in temporal lobe epilepsy; but their frequency of occurrence individually and as a group in TLE is significant. One would not expect that all patients suffering from temporal lobe epilepsy would show all the possible symptoms of this disease. The extent and severity of the causative head injury, or the size and location of a neoplasm, would be influential in determining the variety and severity of the patient's symptoms. In the case of Ellen G. White, we know that she was unconscious for a period of three weeks following her head injury; that she was amnesic for the entire episode; and that she was subsequently unable to attend school due to emotional, physical, and neurological symptoms. One should not be surprised that Ellen manifested so many of the symptoms that are encountered in temporal lobe epilepsy.

In 1974 Waxman and Geschwind reported on hypergraphia as they had observed it in seven patients with temporal lobe epilepsy:

The case histories summarized above are striking in that in each case there was an unusual tendency for the patient to write extensively, typically in a meticulous manner. Each of the authors has observed many other patients besides these seven in whom there was evidence for a temporal lobe disorder and who also wrote to an unusual degree. The literature contains numerous references to the circumstantial and pedantic character of speech of temporal lobe epileptics. In describing a patient with psychomotor seizures, Kraepelin, as early as 1906, noted that the patient "gives a connected, though very long-winded account of his condition . . ." We believe that the extensive and in some cases compulsive writing we have observed in temporal lobe epileptic patients reflects the previously documented deepening of emotional response in the presence of relatively preserved intellectual function. In this context, it is not surprising that, in speech, some temporal lobe epileptics are described as circumstantial or pedantic or as exhibiting "stickiness" or "viscosity."¹⁰⁶

The first patient Waxman and Geschwind discussed was a "24 year old right handed woman who began to have seizures at age 10 and behavioral disturbances at age 15." Following her examination and treatment she continued to have seizures and became "devoutly religious and experienced at least five religious conversions." It was determined that her brain lesion was in her right temporal lobe. She experienced visual hallucinations with "blue-green flashing light," and showed "great interest in mystical issues and in particular the meaning of existence and the fate of the universe. She also complained of having no interest in sexual activities." She spent several hours a day writing, including poetry, "usually with a moral or philosophical theme." A song she had learned she copied several hundred times and felt "compelled to write a word over and over."¹⁰⁷

The following table from David M. Bear and Paul Fedio, "Quantitative Analysis of Interictal Behavior in Temporal Lobe Epilepsy," *Archives of Neurology* 34, pages 454-457, 1977. Reproduced with permission.

Trait	Clinical Observations	Investigators
Characteristics attributed to interictal [between seizure] behavior in Temporal Lobe Epilepsy		
Emotionality	Deepening of all emotions, sustained intense affect	Davison and Bagley, Glaser, Hill, Slater, Slater & Beard, & Waxman and Geschwind
Elation, euphoria	Grandiosity, exhilarated mood, diagnosis of manic-depressive disease	Flor-Henry, and Slater and Beard
Sadness	Discouragement, tearfulness, self-depreciation; diagnosis of depression, suicide attempts	Glaser, Slater and Moran, Williams
Anger	Increased temper, irritability	Falconer, McIntyre et al, Taylor, and Treffert
Aggression	Overt hostility, rage attacks, violent crimes, murder	Davidson, Mark and Ervin, Mark et al, & Serafetinides
Altered sexual interest	Loss of libido, hyposexuality, fetishism, transvestitism, exhibitionism, hypersexual episodes	Blumer, Blumer & Walker, Davies & Morgenstern, Gastaut & Collomb, Hierons, Hooshmand & Brawley, and Mitchell et al
Guilt	Tendency to self-scrutiny and self-recrimination	Bear, Blumer, Dominian et al, & Waxman & Geschwind
Hypermoralism	Attention to rules with inability to distinguish significant from minor infraction; desire to punish offenders	Blumer, Mark & Ervin, and Waxman and Geschwind
Obsessionalism	Ritualism; orderliness; compulsive attention to detail	Bear, Blumer, Bruens, and Waxman and Geschwind
Circumstantiality	Loquacious, pedantic; overly detailed, peripheral	Bear, Slater and Beard, and Waxman and Geschwind
Viscosity	Stickiness; tendency to repetition	Blumer and Glaser
Sense of personal	Events given highly charged, personal significance; divine guidance ascribed to many features of patient's life	Glaser, Slater and Beard, & Waxman and Geschwind
Hypergraphia	Keeping extensive diaries, detailed notes; writing autobiography or novel	Blumer, Waxman and Geschwind
Religiosity	Holding deep religious beliefs, often idiosyncratic; multiple conversions, mystical states	Dewhurst & Beard, Ervin, Hill, Slater, and Slater and Beard
Philosophical interest	Nascent metaphysical or moral speculations, cosmological theories	Bear, Slater & Beard and Waxman and Geschwind
Dependence, passivity	Cosmic helplessness, "at hands of fate"; protestations of helplessness	Bear, Ferguson et al, and Waxman and Geschwind
Humorlessness, sobriety	Overgeneralized ponderous concern; humor lacking or idiosyncratic	Bear, Ferguson et al, and Waxman and Geschwind
Paranoia	Suspicious, overinterpretive of motives & events; diagnosis — paranoid schizophrenia	Bruens, Hill, Pond & Slater and Beard

Sachdev and Waxman¹⁰⁸ in 1981 studied the frequency and degree of hypergraphia in temporal lobe epilepsy by sending out letters to all patients who had been admitted to the hospital at the Palo Alto Veterans Administration Medical Center and discharged between 1972 and 1978 with a diagnosis of epilepsy or seizure disorder. They were asked to answer to the best of their ability questions regarding their present state of health, their understanding of their disease, and the change the disease had caused in their lives. Those who had a diagnosis of temporal lobe epilepsy used 4200 to 5540 words in their reply; those with a possible diagnosis of temporal lobe epilepsy used from 120 to 475 words, while those who had no evidence of temporal lobe epilepsy used from 33 to 120 words. Sachdev and Waxman concluded "that hypergraphia is one of the relatively more obvious traits of the interictal behaviour syndrome."

"Epileptic seizures may follow shortly after the accident or the epilepsy may not manifest itself for many years, sometimes as long as twenty years later."

Geschwind summarized his findings as follows:

The degree of hypergraphia in many of these patients is striking. Thus patients may regularly write essays or sermons. One patient had trunks filled with his writings. A neurologist in New Zealand was presented by one of his patients with over twenty volumes of her selected handwritten works. I have recently seen a patient who developed temporal lobe epilepsy after partial resection of one temporal lobe during the removal of an aneurysm. He had never had intellectual interest but, following the appearance of temporal lobe epilepsy, became consumed with the thought that he had the mission to write something important.¹⁰⁹

The question naturally arises, Is every temporal lobe epileptic hypergraphic to some extent? Is it specific for temporal lobe epileptics, or is it also found in other epilepsies? Hermann and his coworkers investigated this in 1983.¹¹⁰ They studied a group of 138 patients, 90 of whom had temporal lobe epilepsy; 29, generalized epilepsy; and 15, a mixed type. All of these patients were sent a letter similar to the one which Sachdev and Waxman had sent to their patients. They found that patients with a temporal lobe spike focus "had a higher response rate relative to nontemporal lobe epilepsy." If one considers hypergraphia an all-or-none phenomenon, "then letter length would suggest support for temporal lobe epilepsy/hypergraphia specificity as the two longest letters (1176 and 1229 words) were written by people with temporal lobe epilepsy." The average length of the letters from the nontemporal lobe epilepsy group was 371 words, for the temporal lobe, 296 words. (The two longest letters from the temporal lobe epilepsy group of Sachdev and Waxman study were 5540 and 4200 words long.) Hermann, et al., suggested "that further research in this area should attempt to determine whether hypergraphia is best conceptualized as a graded or an all-or-none phenomenon."

The compulsion to write was clearly evident in Ellen G. White. She wrote an almost unbelievable quantity; so that at the time of her death in 1915, her literary productions consisted of well over 100,000 pages, including 4,000 articles in church periodicals.¹¹¹ The printed pages of the nine volumes of her *Testimonies* amount to 4,812 pages, while the "Conflict of the Ages" series has 3,603 pages. She wrote in addition many letters that were not preserved, particularly in the earlier years of her labors. She also kept a diary and an extensive journal.

Ellen started her public writing in 1845. To reach 100,000 pages before she died in 1915, she would have had to average at least three and a half pages every day of her life, in health or in sickness, on Sabbaths, and when traveling or attending conferences.

An entry in her diary on June 12, 1892, illustrates the extensive writing that was a part of her daily life.

Articles written: missionary work, 15 pages letter paper. A. T. Robinson, 13 pages; Sister Ings, 5 pages; Brother Lockwood, 5 pages; Sara McEnterfer, 2 pages; Ella May and Mable White, 4 pages. Large document to C. H. Jones in regard to publishing and

health institutions. J. E. White, 12 pages. Sent Brother Wessels 5 letter pages, to Elder E. J. Waggoner to London; to Elder Washburn, England, 1 page.¹¹²

This made a total of 62 pages, besides the "large document" to C. H. Jones. But more significant than the total quantity she wrote is the compulsion and pressure she felt to write.

This is already apparent in the article she wrote to the editor of the *Day Star* after he had published her so-called first vision on December 20, 1845. She said: "My vision which you published in the *Day Star* was written under a deep sense of duty, to you, not expecting you would publish it."¹¹³

I felt that I should have rest, but could see no opportunity for relief. I was speaking to the people several times a week, and writing many pages of personal testimonies The blood rushed to my brain, frequently causing me to reel and nearly fall. I had the nosebleed often, especially after making an effort to write. I was compelled to lay aside my writing, but could not throw off the burden of anxiety and responsibility upon me I then wrote out a portion of that which was shown me in regard to the Institute, but could not get out the entire subject because of pressure of blood to the brain I supposed that after resting a few days I could again resume my writing. But to my great grief I found that the condition of my brain made it impossible for me to write. The idea of writing testimonies, either general or personal, was given up, and I was in continual distress because I could not write them.¹¹⁴ (*Testimonies*, vol. I, pages 576-577).

Throughout her long life this early sense of duty remained, accompanied by an ever-increasing feeling of mission and divine election, so frequently expressed in her writings and lectures. This deep conviction of a special, God-given mission to the world is illustrated by the following statements in her writing:

I had not the least idea of writing as I have done, but the Lord has carried my mind on and on until you have the matter I send.¹¹⁵

In the night season the Lord gives me instruction, in symbols, and then explains their meaning. He gives me the word, and I dare not refuse to give it to the people.¹¹⁶

God has given me a testimony to bear to His people that he has given to no other and I must bear this testimony which is like fire shut up in my bones.^{117,118}

I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision.^{119,120}

In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouths of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the testimonies of His Spirit.¹²¹

Physically, I have always been a broken vessel; and yet in my old age the Lord continues to move upon me by His Holy Spirit to write the most important books that have ever come before the churches and the world.^{122,123}

In a letter that Ellen wrote to Lucinda Hall on April 8, 1876, she said:

I have a special work at this time to write out the things that the Lord has shown me I have felt that I must neglect everything to get out these writings. I have not attended meetings for two weeks While Elders Waggoner and Loughborough are here I let them do the work, and I keep all my strength for one purpose — to write I have a work to do that has been a great burden to my soul. How great, no one but the Lord knows (*Review and Herald* August 16, 1873, p. 6).

Another illustration of her compulsion to write is obvious in a 1906 letter to George Amadon:

The evening after the Sabbath I retired, and rested well without ache or pain until half past ten. I was unable to sleep. I have received instruction, and I seldom lie in bed after such instruction comes I left my bed and wrote for five hours as fast as my pen could trace the lines.¹²⁴

Arthur White also called attention to Ellen's voluminous writing, and her sense of compulsion to write.

"Write, write, write, I feel that I must, and not delay," penned Ellen in 1844. In these words are summed up the objective of her most important work Her childhood experience and her

education were not such as we would ordinarily think of as naturally fitting one to spend a lifetime in writing When we sum up the story we find that Mrs. White was a voluminous writer. Today there are 18,000 pages in the current E. G. White books. Taking these with the earlier editions which are now out of print, we have a total of 22,000 pages. We may add to this more than two thousand articles which have appeared in our various denominational journals. These reduced to book pages would give us another 12,000 pages. In addition to this are many thousands of pages of manuscript matter which, because of its local or personal character was not published.¹²⁵

It has already been noted that Geschwind has called attention to the deep philosophical, moral, and religious concerns that temporal lobe epileptics manifest, in strong contrast to their educational background.¹²⁶ When these are combined with an uncontrollable urge to write, the temptation to borrow material from others in massive proportion may become irresistible. The call to *write, write, write* can easily change to *borrow, borrow, borrow*. Under a strong religious compulsion, such a writer could well persuade herself that it was God who made her find the material she wanted to copy; and that she was simply obeying the divine obligation and prompting of the Spirit to copy the writings of others and put it out under her own name.

Ron Graybill has recently discussed Ellen White's extensive borrowing and he also points to Ellen's compulsion to write as a possible cause for her extensive use of unacknowledged sources.

When the scope of her writing expanded, first into health topics, and later into history, Mrs. White found herself in a position where plagiarism was hard to avoid. Her limited education did not equip her for the broad range of topics she tried to cover. Nevertheless, she felt "mightily wrought upon" to write. "Should I resist these impressions to write, when I am so burdened?" she asked. "I must obey the movings of the Spirit of God or withdraw myself from having any connection with the work." "I take no credit of ability in myself to write the articles in the paper or to write the books which I publish," she said. "Certainly I could not originate them. I have been receiving light for the last forty-five years and I have been communicating the light given me of Heaven to our people." This strong self-image as an inspired writer may have inhibited her ability to realize how much her writings depended on other authors. She could scarcely have sensed the degree to which her visions and dreams were shaped by her reading, and thus she came to believe that her revelations were the original sources of what she wrote.¹²⁷

"When we come to the point as to whether one has to believe in Ellen White, . . . or accept her visions as real this church has never taken this position. I hope it never does"

— Neal C. Wilson

How much did Ellen copy? Apparently no one yet knows this accurately, but it is clearly massive. Since 1887, when Canright first called attention to her plagiarism, William Peterson, Ingemar Linden, Ronald Numbers, Jonathan Butler, Don McAdams, Walter Rea, Warren H. Johns, Ron Graybill, and others have added to the accumulating evidence of her lifelong, uncredited source dependency.

Robert W. Olson in the *Adventist Review* of February 23, 1984, stated that "possibly 50 percent or more of the material in the book [*The Great Controversy*] was drawn from other sources." Only further research will finally determine how much more than "50 percent" was actually copied from other authors in this book by Ellen. Some estimate that it may be as high as 90 percent, but it is probably not too important whether half or nine tenths is borrowed. Ellen *had* to write, and to produce the quantity she did she had no recourse but to copy from others; and this, with the help of her secretaries, she did well.

Ellen's literary borrowing seems to have started in her very first article

published in the *Day Star* of January 24, 1846, where she reported on her so-called first vision of December 1844. Apparently she had in front of her the pamphlet *The Christian Experience of William E. Foy*, which was published and copyrighted in 1845. Her indebtedness to Foy is evident in many places in her article, but the most striking place is where Foy's guide says: "Those that eat of the fruit of this tree return to earth no more" (page 14). Ellen, in turn, has Jesus say: "Those who eat of the fruit of this land go back to earth no more."¹²⁹

Repetitiveness

An easily observable trait in the temporal lobe epileptic is perseveration, stickiness, or viscosity — a form of automatism, which applies both to speech and writing, in which the individual repeats words, phrases, sentences, or, as Fenton expressed it, "a tendency to adhere to each thought, feeling and action."¹³⁰ For example, many who saw Ellen White experience a vision report that she often exclaimed *glory, glory, glory* at the onset of a vision. Daly describes a case reported by Penfield and Jasper of a boy who "at the beginning of attacks heard a voice calling; 'Sylvere, Sylvere, Sylvere' — the patient's first name." A forty-five year old man was heard to say, "*Mother, Mother, Mother.*" And an admitted agnostic repeatedly uttered "*God, God — oh, my God.*"¹³¹ It would be easy for Ellen's subconscious mind to select the repetition *glory, glory, glory* because the word *glory* was commonly used in the Methodist meetings she attended in her adolescence.

Ellen gave evidence of this repetitiveness in her first publication when, as an eighteen-year old, she repeated the words "I saw" sixteen times. In a second contribution to the same periodical three weeks later she used "I saw" thirteen times. Two months after this in an article in *The Little Remnant Scattered Abroad*, she employed "I saw" thirty-five times. The repetition of this phrase becomes increasingly noticeable in Ellen's writings, until in some pages nearly every sentence begins with these words, as seen in an article by her in an 1849 *Present Truth* where, in thirteen sentences, she used "I saw" or "I was shown" eleven times.¹³²

Many other words beginning or imbedded in her sentences illustrate this same repetitiveness — words such as "they" and "you". In all her early publications, this can easily be seen, particularly in the first one hundred pages of volume one of her *Testimonies*, and volume two of *Spiritual Gifts*. In later editions of her works most repetition, particularly of "I saw" and "I was shown," was eliminated. Perhaps at first the frequent use of the "I saw" in her writings was looked upon as reinforcing a claim for divine inspiration. As time went on, the evidence of this repetition was greatly reduced by editors, but never entirely eliminated.^{133, 134}

Ellen's son, W. C. White, agreed "that in the original manuscripts . . . there was such repetition." And Ellen wrote in 1906:

While my husband lived, he acted as a helper and counselor — The instruction I received in vision was faithfully written out by me Afterward we examined the matter together, my husband correcting grammatical errors, and eliminating needless repetition.¹³⁵

Later "the secretaries were expected . . . to leave out that which was plainly unnecessary repetition." Arthur White also believed that "in some original manuscripts" there was much repetition, when Ellen was "perplexed by many cares and burdens."¹³⁶

Many repetitions that were not so objectionable as "I saw" remained even in her later writings. Particularly significant are cases in which she represented others as speaking or writing with the same repetitiveness that she did. For example: "Said the angel, '*Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord, Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.*'"¹³⁷

Ellen had two visions on January 5, 1849, at Rocky Hill, Connecticut. In the second vision she saw four angels heading toward earth on a special mission. Jesus "gazed in pity on the remnant, . . . raised His hands, and with a voice of deep pity cried, '*my blood, Father, my blood, my blood, my blood.*' . . . Then I saw an angel . . . crying with a loud voice, '*Hold! Hold! Hold! Hold!*'" In the same year she wrote also: "I heard an angel say, '*Speed the swift messengers, speed the swift messengers.*'"¹³⁸ One year later she quoted an angel's question: "Can such enter heaven?" Another angel answered, "No, *never, never, never.*"¹³⁹

In Ellen's report of her March 14, 1852, vision at Ballston, the following is given:

If the sins do not go beforehand to judgment they will never go. *Thy people, thy people, thy people, thy people not ready, not ready, not ready.* In that time one sin uncovered will crush the soul. Heaven will give no answer. That time will try men's souls. Confusion will take place and their desire will not be accomplished. Can ye not see? . . . *Get ready! Get ready! Get ready!* almost finished . . . *I behold, I behold* those that have that excellent reward sacrifice to obtain it . . . Help the children *get ready*, something must be done. *Self! self!* O Jesus, pity and forgive thine erring children.¹⁴⁰

In 1852 at Vergennes, Ellen said of James White: "The power of God was upon him . . . said he, '*I hope it will go out!* In the name of the Lord, *I hope it will go out!*'"^{141, 142, 143, 144}

In the Sutton vision of Ellen White in 1850, we have the following example:

Then *I saw* we must drink *deep, deep*, from the water of the fountain . . . *I saw* that Brother Bates must be open, ready to yield up a dear point when the clear light shines. *I saw* that we must be more like Jesus . . . Then *I saw* James and Brother Bates; said the angel, *press together, press together* ye shepherds lest the sheep be scattered. Love one another as I have loved you. *Swim, swim, swim, plunge deep, deep, deep*, in the ocean of God's love. *I saw* that we must overcome . . .¹⁴⁵

On January 3, 1875, in Battle Creek, Ellen had a vision reported by W. C. White that demonstrated some of the typical features of a temporal lobe seizure, including repetitiveness. She had been ill with influenza and was seated in a large arm chair, warmly wrapped in blankets.

Then mother undertook to pray, and in a hoarse, labored voice, she uttered two or three sentences of petition. Suddenly her voice broke clean and musical, and we heard the ringing shout, "Glory to God!" We all looked up, and saw that she was in vision. Her hands were folded across her breast. Her eyes were directed intently upward, and her lips were closed. There was no breathing, although the heart continued its action. As she looked intently upward, an expression of anxiety came into her face. She threw aside her blankets, and stepping forward, walked back and forth in the room. Wringing her hands, she moaned, "Dark! Dark! All dark! So dark!" Then after a few moments silence, she exclaimed with emphasis, and a brightening of her countenance, "A light! A little light! More light! Much light!! . . . Following her exclamatory remarks regarding the lights, she sat down in her chair."^{146, 147, 148}

In 1868 she wrote: "He will not accept half a sacrifice. *All, all, all* is God's."¹⁴⁹ In *Early Writings* (2nd ed., 1882) she wrote: "Said the angel, '*Get ready, get ready, get ready*, Ye will have to die a greater death to the world than ye have ever yet died!'"¹⁵⁰

It seems clear that in many instances the words attributed to the angels and Christ are phrased with Ellen's characteristic repetitiveness — the "stickiness" of the temporal lobe epileptic. In books such as the later editions of *Great Controversy* and subsequent books like the *Desire of Ages* and *Acts of the Apostles*, in which there is so much material paraphrased from other authors and which were well edited, one would expect to see little of her characteristic tendency to repeat; but some evidence remains.

Towards the end of her stay in Australia, Ellen had a vision, as reported by her to G. B. Starr:

"I was as wide awake as I am now, and there appeared a chariot of gold and horses of silver above me, and Jesus, in royal majesty, was seated in the chariot . . . Then there came the words rolling down over the clouds from the chariot from the lips of Jesus, 'Fannie Bolton is your adversary! Fannie Bolton is your adversary!' repeated three times. Now," said Sister White, "I had this same vision about seven years ago, when my niece Mary Clough was on my writings."

She also repeated "*drudge, drudge, drudge, drudge*" in a letter in 1892 from Australia.¹⁵¹ Still later she wrote: "I have received a letter from Elder Daniells regarding the addition of another building to the Review

and Herald office. The answer I make to this is: *No, no, no.*"^{152, 153} It was early in December 1914 that she testified to hearing voices in the night season, crying out: "*Advance! Advance! Advance!* Press the battle to the gate!"¹⁵⁴

In 1901 Ellen said, "*God forbid! God forbid*, brethren." In a letter in 1904 she wrote, "*Cut loose, cut loose*, is my message."¹⁵⁵ "The first chapter of Daniel . . . *read it, read it*, and as you *read*, become wise not in your own conceit but wise like Daniel."¹⁵⁶ "The great difficulties which have existed in Battle Creek *would not have been*. The great dearth of means *would not have been*."¹⁵⁷ In a letter she wrote to A. G. Daniells and W. W. Prescott on May 20, 1904, she reports Christ as saying: "*Unite, unite, unite* in perfect harmony."^{158, 159}

Horace Shaw, in his doctoral dissertation in 1959, included the results of a questionnaire which he had mailed out to those who might have known Ellen White personally. One correspondent reported on a meeting she had attended at which Ellen spoke. "After what seemed to be her parting admonition she hesitated for a moment and then said, '*Be sensible, be sensible, be sensible.*'"¹⁶⁰

Hypermoralism

Another trait in the writings of Ellen G. White is one that includes hypermoralism, sobriety, humorlessness, and multiple exhortations. This is particularly evident in writings which were intended for her fellow church members. A typical example of this is seen in a letter written to Dear Sister E in 1873:

I have been shown that you need a thorough conversion. You are not now on the right track to obtain that peace and happiness which the true, humble, cross-bearing believer is sure to receive . . . You have a selfish disposition . . . Your principal thoughts are for yourself, to please yourself . . . You neglect to cheerfully engage in the work which God has left you to do. You overlook the common, simple duties lying directly in your pathway . . . You do not study to make others happy . . . You indulge in a dreamy habit, which must be broken up . . . You are not improving as fast as you might, and as you must . . . You have been a cloud and a shadow in the family . . . You have not had the grace of God in your heart . . . You love to think and talk about young men. You interpret their civilities as a special regard for yourself. You flatter yourself . . . A reformation must commence in your father's family. You bear the stamp of your father's character. You should endeavor to shun his errors and his extremes . . . You do not love children. In fact you do not love anything which requires steady, earnest, persevering effort.¹⁶¹

In this seven-page letter, *seventy-five* sentences begin with *you*, and an additional 115 times *you* is used in the middle of sentences and is an example of the judgmentalness and hypermoralism seen in the temporal lobe epileptic, so often encountered in Ellen's writings.¹⁶²

Hypermoralism and hyperethicalness of temporal lobe epileptics is closely related to their humorlessness, viscosity, attention to detail, and self-scrutiny. Waxman and Geschwind in 1975 wrote:

There is often a striking preoccupation with detail, especially as concerns moral or ethical issues or both. There are no trifles for these patients . . . Preoccupation with detail and clarity and a profound sense of righteousness are evident in the speech of many of our patients.¹⁶³

Other researchers have described this phenomenon:

All events are serious to these patients . . . They may become excessively concerned with moral issues and involve themselves with rights and wrongs of rather trivial affairs. . . the right or wrong of every item needs to be considered along with all ramifications; no issue can be easily dropped; these patients become long winded in speech and often feel the need to put down their thoughts in lengthy writings; they tend to be remarkably without humor.¹⁶⁴

Temporal lobe epileptics tend to be not only hyperethical, but often hyper-religious. To them, their own ministers may lack deep religious conviction . . . These basic traits account for a deepening of emotional response with over emphasis on the qualities of good and evil, right and wrong.¹⁶⁵

To feel strongly about moral and ethical issues is probably a desirable trait; how this trait is executed and expressed is significant, however, in relation to temporal lobe epilepsy. It is the excessive concern with trivial questions, the obsession with moral issues, the lack of understanding and tolerance for divergent opinions, and the resulting judgment and condemnation of those who differ that set these patients apart. This is often accompanied by a sense of divine mission and authority. They have been called "inflexible" and are not likely to change their point of view.

As Beard has pointed out, there is a ponderousness, long-windedness, and a dullness in these patients, together with egocentricity, unctuous utterances, and stickiness.¹⁶⁶

Ellen's hypermoralism is illustrated by her discussion on dress.

I was shown that some of the people of God imitate the fashions of the world, and are fast losing their peculiar, holy character, which should distinguish them as God's people. I was pointed back to God's ancient people, and then was led to compare their apparel with the mode of dress in these last days. What a difference! What a change! Then the women were not as bold as now. When they went in public they covered their face with a veil (sic). In these last days fashions are shameful and immodest The small bonnets, exposing the face and head, show a lack of modesty Young and old, God is now testing you. You are deciding your own eternal destiny. Your pride, your love to follow the fashions of the world, are all put in the scale, and the weight of evil is fearfully against you Many, I saw, were flattering themselves that they were good Christians, who have not a single ray of light from Jesus And I saw that the Lord was whetting his sword in heaven to cut them down.¹⁶⁷⁻¹⁷¹

About children playing on the Sabbath she had this advice:

Parents, above every thing, take care of your children upon the Sabbath. Do not suffer them to violate God's holy day by playing in the house or out of doors. You may just as well break the Sabbath yourselves as to let your children do it, and when you suffer your children to wander about, and suffer them to play upon the Sabbath, God looks upon you as Sabbath-breakers.¹⁷²

I have long been designing to speak to my sisters and tell them that, from what the Lord has been pleased to show me from time to time, there is a great fault among them Their words are not as select and well chosen as those of women who have received the grace of God should be. They are too familiar with their brethren. They linger around them, incline toward them, and seem to choose their society. They are highly gratified with their attention. From the light which the Lord has given me, our sisters should pursue a very different course. They should be more reserved, manifest less boldness, and encourage in themselves "shamefacedness and sobriety." Both brethren and sisters indulge in too much jovial talk when in each other's society. Women professing godliness indulge in much jesting, joking and laughing.^{173,174} No trifling, common conversation is to be indulged. God looks into every secret thing of life.¹⁷⁵ I have been shown that the true followers of Jesus will discard picnics, donations, shows, and other gatherings for pleasure.¹⁷⁶

With many young ladies the boys are the theme of conversations, with the young men, it is the girls They talk of those subjects upon which their minds mostly run. The recording angel is writing the words of these professed Christian boys and girls.¹⁷⁷

Jesting, joking, and worldly conversation belong to the world The communication opened between God and his soul . . . will not cause levity or the semblance of a smile, but will solemnize the mind.¹⁷⁸

Do not, my sister, trifle longer with your own souls and with God. I have been shown that the main cause of your backsliding is your love of dress . . . and you find yourselves with scarcely a spark of the love of God in your hearts I have been shown that our church rules are very deficient. All exhibitions of pride in dress, which is forbidden in the word of God, should be sufficient reason for church discipline.¹⁷⁹ Unless we do this, our churches will become demoralized.¹⁸⁰

Perhaps related to Ellen's opposition to "worldly conversation" was

her warning against story books and the reading of fiction:

"Dear Brother E: . . . I was much surprised to read your recommendation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and SUCH BOOKS. You are in danger of becoming somewhat careless in your writing I have repeatedly seen the evil of reading such books.¹⁸¹

Ellen also felt constrained to speak out against bicycles, tennis, and cricket.

I was shown things among our people that were not in accordance with their faith. There seemed to be a bicycle craze. Money was spent to gratify an enthusiasm in this direction that might better, far better, have been invested in building houses of worship There was a spirit of strife and contention among them as to which should be the greatest. The spirit was similar to that manifested in the baseball games in the college ground. Said my Guide: These things are an offense to God.¹⁸²

She also wrote:

A view of things was presented before me in which the students were playing games of tennis and cricket. Then I was given instruction regarding the character of these amusements. They were presented to me as a species of idolatry, like the idols of the nations Angels of God . . . were ashamed that such an exhibition should be given by the professed children of God.¹⁸³

In addition to the terrible consequences which Ellen ascribed to masturbation, she threatened those who wore hair pieces with equally frightening results.

Fashion loads the heads of women with artificial braids and pads . . . which heat and excite the spinal nerve centers in the brain The action of the blood upon the lower or animal organs of the brain, causes unnatural activity, tends to recklessness in morals, and the mind and heart is in danger of being corrupted. As the animal organs are excited and strengthened, the morals are enfeebled. The moral and intellectual powers of the mind become servants of the animal Many have lost their reason, and become hopelessly insane, by following this deforming fashion.¹⁸⁴

Hyposexuality

Hyposexuality has been shown to be a frequent symptom in temporal lobe epilepsy. Walker and Blumer¹⁸⁵ state that such altered sexuality "is a . . . depression of all sexual experience, not just the impairment of genital expression. In an individual who develops epilepsy before puberty, he or she may never know psychosexual experiences." Blumer has pointed out that both hyposexuality and "viscosity" are stable manifestations in temporal lobe epilepsy, and become manifest about two years after the onset of the epilepsy.

Such hyposexuality has been eliminated in temporal lobe epileptics by the surgical removal of the involved area of the temporal lobe. Frigidity or low sexual drive are symptoms of the hyposexuality. Shukla¹⁸⁶ et al reported that "hyposexuality appears to be uniquely associated with temporal lobe epilepsy" (as compared with generalized epilepsy), and that these patients "showed no concern over it." In Shukla's study, twenty-eight of forty-four patients were hyposexual. Sixty four percent of female patients were hyposexual and "took part in sexual relations only on repeated requests from their husbands." Shukla also reports that of Gastaut and Colomb's patients, two-thirds were hyposexual.

In studying Ellen G. White in regard to the trait of hyposexuality, we must remember that her original accident occurred when she was nine years old, probably before puberty. She was married at age eighteen, had four sons, and was widowed when she was fifty-three years old. Ellen did not remarry and died at the age of eighty-seven.

Ellen wrote considerably about relations between the sexes and on sexuality. Her advice about the very young suggests the danger of permitting association between small children of the opposite sex. This counsel seems to be motivated by her fear that these small children might become sexually aroused and fall prey to the devastating practice of masturbation.

This is a fast age. Little boys and girls commence paying attention to one another when they should both be in the nursery,

taking lessons in modesty and deportment. What is the effect of this common mixing up? Does it increase chastity in the youth who thus gather together? No, indeed! It increases the first lustful passions; after such meetings the youth are crazed by the devil and give themselves up to their vile practices.¹⁸⁷

To an adult Ellen gave the following advice:

You have fallen into the sad error which is so prevalent in this degenerate age, especially with women. You are too fond of the other sex You seem to know considerable about anticipated marriages, and write and talk about these things. This only causes dearth to your soul You have done great injustice to yourself in permitting your mind and conversation to dwell upon love and marriage.¹⁸⁸

Many parents do not obtain the knowledge that they should in the married life They have united themselves in marriage to the object of their choice, and therefore reason that marriage sanctified the indulgence of the baser passions. Even men and women professing godliness give loose rein to their lustful passions, and have no thought that God holds them accountable for the expenditure of vital energy, which weakens their hold on life and enervates the entire system.¹⁸⁹

Ellen continued her advice:

Let the Christian wife refrain, both in word and act, from exciting the animal passions of her husband. Many have no strength at all to waste in this direction. From their youth up they have weakened the brain and sapped the constitution by the gratification of animal passions.¹⁹⁰

Ellen's fearful description of the results of masturbation was inspired perhaps by her own hyposexuality and contemporary literature on the topic.

Females possess less vital force than the other sex The results of self-abuse in them is seen in various diseases, such as . . . loss of memory and sight, great weakness in the back and loins, affections of the spine, the head often decays inwardly. Cancerous humor, which would lay dormant in the system their life-time, is inflamed, and commences its eating, destructive work. The mind is often utterly ruined, and insanity takes place.¹⁹¹ Ellen states that her early accident kept her from knowing about these secret vices.¹⁹²

Elsewhere Ellen adds to this: "Solitary vice is killing thousands and tens of thousands."¹⁹³

"The objectivity with which patients with complex partial seizures can describe their hallucinations is an extremely important diagnostic point." Dreifuss (Advances in Neurology 11:197-198 . . . 1975)

Ellen also felt free to counsel missionaries not to have children while in the mission field.

I was shown that Brother and Sister V — had departed from God's counsel in bringing into the world children. God required all there was of them in His work for the Master, but the enemy came in, and his counsel was followed When I learned that you were soon to have an increase in your family, I knew that you were not doing the will of God, but following your own inclination to please yourselves The time has come when, in one sense, they that have wives be as though they had none I am thoroughly disgusted with the course of our preachers and workers. They seem to think one of the important branches of the work is first to get as many children into the world as possible.¹⁹⁴

Ellen White was clearly a very religious woman. What is not so often recognized is the fragility of her religious experience and her periods of depression, doubt, and despair — each of which was followed sooner or later by a renewal of faith and courage. Ellen openly shared these episodes that appeared periodically during most of her life. Hurst and

Beard in 1970 called attention to the frequency of religious crises and conversions in temporal lobe epileptics.¹⁹⁵⁻²⁰⁴

Pseudoseizures

Conditions classified as *pseudoepilepsy* and *pseudoseizures* may be confused with partial complex seizures. These include hysteria, conversion reactions, narcolepsy, syncope, hyperventilation, and others. If the individual is conscious during these experiences, it is not epilepsy. Psychogenic reactions, such as seen in intense religious excitement, favor the development of hysteria. The revival meetings that were popular during the earlier years of Ellen's visionary experiences often saw men and women fall from their seats, cry for mercy, writhe in agony, and faint. Hysterical attacks occur only when there is an audience to witness them. Recent investigations also indicate that at least some individuals who claim that they are subject to extrasensory or paranormal experiences may actually suffer from a temporal lobe dysfunction which is apparently hereditary. Patients with temporal lobe epileptic seizures may also have attacks of hysteria.²⁰⁵

It has been suggested that if Ellen's visions are credited to a malfunction of her temporal lobes, that such an explanation neglects to take into account the emotional, cultural, and psychic factors that could have been responsible for her trances as has occurred in other individuals in the past. Such questions overlook the fact that the temporal lobe epileptic participates in the visionary experience that is imposed upon him with his total physical, intellectual, emotional, religious, and cultural being — in which all past and present influences have a part. The visionary experience is not something *outside* the real person; it is produced by and in the total person — including the effects of any organic malfunction that may be present.

Summary and Conclusion

The visionary experiences of Ellen G. White and her behavioral characteristics have been examined from the perspective of current clinical knowledge. From this overview may be drawn the following conclusions:

1. Ellen was a healthy normal girl, both physically and emotionally, until at the age of nine, she was hit by a stone on the nasal area of her face. She was unconscious for 3 weeks, indicating a severe brain injury; and was not able to remember anything about the accident or its aftermath. The type and location of her head injury, and the resulting period of unconsciousness and amnesia, made it likely that she would ultimately develop epileptic seizures.
2. Her dreams and visions began at age fifteen, some six years after her accident; and they continued throughout her life. When Ellen's vision experiences are compared with the seizures of temporal lobe epilepsy, they are found to be typical of partial complex seizures.
3. Following this, her behavioral traits were compared with those of temporal lobe epileptics and found to be similar. Also discussed was the self-confessed compulsive drive of Ellen to write, culminating in a total quantity of writing that few have ever equaled. Ellen's habit of borrowing freely from other authors without giving them the deserved credit is perhaps also partially explainable by this intense drive to write (hypergraphia) and by her own limited formal education that ended with the third grade. The borrowing enabled her to include that which she was unable to produce herself. To say, however, that she did not know that literary sources should be acknowledged seems difficult to sustain, since some from whom she borrowed even in her earlier writings were meticulous in indicating their sources with each quotation. This was clearly seen in the works of J. N. Andrews, from whom she borrowed early.
4. Ellen had another epileptic trait that is very visible even today in her writings, and was also present in her speech — namely the tendency to hang on to a word, phrase, or thought, and repeat these in succession — a viscosity. This is most striking

where single words are repeated, such as the sentence ascribed to Christ: "my blood, father, my blood, my blood" or when the angel is made to say "never, never, never"; or where she says "write, write, write, write." Or "dark! dark! All dark! So dark!" Or "All, all, all, is God's." This repetitiveness shows up in nearly all of Ellen's writings in one way or another as it does in the writings of other temporal lobe epileptics. As we have shown, the editing of Ellen's later writings removed many of these repetitions, but not all. Most striking was her use of the words "I saw," where at times every sentence began with this repetitious introduction.

Ellen White autopsy?

This titillating exchange took place during a recently videotaped interview with Ellen White's grandchildren, siblings Arthur White and Grace Jacques, taken by James Nix, assistant secretary of the White Estate and director of the White Estate branch in the Loma Linda University Library Heritage Room:

Nix: Do you know, why wasn't Ellen White buried immediately back there [in 1915]?

White: This is a question I know very little about. I did not know until a few years ago that the dirt was not put over the casket immediately. She was held for some time, and Edson spoke of seeing her in the casket at a later time. Why, I don't know. There was some talk of fears of Dr. Kellogg having the body exhumed to have her brain examined. There was some talk about it.

Jacques: I remember that.

White: And it could be; and if there was any reason, I would suppose that that was the reason. I have heard talk, but I have nothing — the kind of evidence that I like to have — Jim, to back [it] up. And in the absence of evidence, I don't like to talk much about it. But there is correspondence which would indicate that the final burial was at a time a little later than the funeral itself.

Her writings and speech had other characteristics that are common in this form of epilepsy, such as humorlessness, soberness, suspicion of the motives of others, ponderousness, hypermorality, and hyperethicallness. Her writings include long accounts of the faults and failures of others, and overinterpretations of the actions and words of fellow church members, accompanied by condemnation. With this went a sense of the great importance of her own work and messages and of the dire consequences of ignoring her counsel. Her hyperethical demands included such requirements as children not playing on the Sabbath, wearing certain types of clothing, and injunctions against tennis, baseball, cricket, and bicycles. Such characteristics of Ellen's thinking and judgment, probably ascribable to the aftereffects of her head injury, have been incomprehensible and alienating to many members of her church. A recent expression of this concern repeats what many have said before:

... how much of the cynicism and loss of faith we see in the church today might have been avoided, if throughout the denomination's history, there had been a little more confidence in the member's ability to handle the truth about the nature of Ellen White's inspiration and work?

Revealing more of the truth earlier on would no doubt have caused some pain, but might not that have been preferable to the disruption of having it forced out in an atmosphere of acrimonious dissent? And might many today who are disillusioned instead have a strong faith in Ellen White's gift and a receptiveness to her counsels, if there had been greater openness? Of course, hand-wringing about the past isn't the point. Nor is it to cast scorn on conscientious church leaders who did what they thought best. The question is, will the church of today see a lesson in all of this?²⁰⁶

In 1977, Paul B. Ricchiuti wrote the following:

But as the 1800s developed, a strange sort of unreality

surrounded her, lifting her up and placing her beyond the reach of fellow believers. The name "Ellen White" became a mystery, for people could not identify with her as a living person. Ellen White had become an institution to them, and was fast becoming a legend. Aware of this herself, she could not stop it, try as she might. Thus well-meaning but confused people drew an obscuring veil across the real Ellen White. And when they pulled it aside from time to time, "Sister White" sat as a sainted statue, book in her hand, fire of God's condemnation in her eyes.

Today that legend can be described in three words. And those three words have become the "woodshed rod" in the hands of unnumbered parents and teachers in the Adventist Church.

Thus, the phrase, "Sister White said," has kindled fires of resentment in the hearts of thousands of Adventists, especially among the young. This disaster is actually a very effective tool, invented by Satan himself, to destroy the church from within.

Ellen White's work and words, her writing and actions have all been used as whips and clubs over the heads of old and young alike.²⁰⁷

There have been periodic discussions and crises about the significance, position, and authority of Ellen in her church; and this has continued to the present. In all her writings Ellen probably tried to present what she believed to be true and elevating, but she was still writing as a temporal lobe epileptic with a very limited education and as a child of her time. There were things that Ellen wrote that clearly reflect this, such as her contentions that eating pork causes leprosy, that earthquakes are caused by burning subterranean coal and oil, that wearing wigs causes insanity, or that the amalgamation of man and beast can be seen in certain races of man.²⁰⁸

As we look at the life and work of Ellen White, the problem is not so much with what she has said or written, but with the authority that she claimed and implied, as well as the authority assigned to her by others. Ellen believed that God had given her a special work to do on earth that He had not given to anyone else; she was a special messenger. This, no doubt, was the basis for her belief in her special authority. If Ellen suffered from temporal lobe epilepsy, with its seizures and altered behavior, this does not mean that all she said or wrote is therefore invalid. It does imply, however, that what she said is not true because *she* said it, but that it *might be true*, based on other evidence than simply her assertions. It also implies that some of what Ellen wrote *might be wrong*. Such an intellectual integrity then would require that Ellen's writings be critically judged by the available evidence. Much of what Ellen or her secretaries wrote or borrowed was beautiful and spiritually elevating, no matter who wrote it. It is also clear that some of what came from Ellen's pen was questionable or erroneous, as might be true of any author. To grant Ellen the intrinsic authority that was rejected by the early leaders of her church is unwarranted and dangerous to the study and progressive understanding by Seventh-day Adventists of Christian doctrine and knowledge in general.

The 1919 Bible Conference seemed to promise a more realistic and honest attitude towards Ellen G. White and her work.²⁰⁹ If this openness and study had been allowed to continue, it is likely that a major criticism by other Christian churches that the Seventh-day Adventist church has a special addition to Scripture — namely the writings of Ellen G. White — would have been avoided.

Who then was Ellen White? Certainly she was a remarkable woman and a devout Christian. Dudley Canright, one of her most severe critics, is reported to have said at the time of her funeral that she was "a most godly woman."²¹⁰

Even though Ellen's trances probably were not the kind of visions she believed them to be, she clearly was a person of vision. She envisioned medical institutions, schools, and publishing houses in various locations around the world; suggested far-reaching changes in denominational organization; and demonstrated at times great insight into the mission of her church. She advocated improved health care and advanced education for her people. Yet it will be difficult to rightly understand Ellen and what she wrote unless one recognizes the presence of the temporal lobe epilepsy from which she apparently suffered her entire adult life, and that so markedly influenced her thinking, writing, and behavior.

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Fencing with Walter Martin

"Who Is Telling the Truth?" That is the title given to a series of five, half-hour segments of the John Ankerberg Show featuring as guests *Adventist Review* editor William Johnsson and cult expert/author Walter Martin.

The title of the series is not inquiring so much about Johnsson versus Martin as about a number of Adventist leaders whose statements about Ellen White's authority have appeared in numerous church-sponsored publications.

In an early exchange Martin argued that if you cannot disagree with Ellen White, "then she has become a pope above the Scriptures. The moment anybody quotes Scripture to disagree with her, the denomination says you are controverting the Spirit of Prophecy. If she is the infallible interpreter, nobody can judge her

Johnsson: She is not an infallible interpreter of Scripture.

Martin: You're sure of that.

Johnsson: I'm sure of it.

Martin: And that is your position or the denomination's?

Johnsson: I think you ought to go to the official statement of beliefs if you want to find out what Seventh-day Adventists believe

Martin (reading from the 3 June '71 *Review & Herald*): "The Bible is an infallible guide, but it needs to be infallibly interpreted to avoid confusion and division. When will the people of God"

Martin and Ankerberg were able to produce and read from the *Review* so many quotes from

individuals like Robert Olson and Arthur White, asserting Ellen White as an "inspired interpreter," that Johnsson was reduced to arguing that "the *Adventist Review* is not the official organ of the Seventh-day Adventist church; it is the general church paper."

Sometimes it hardly seemed fair when Ankerberg, the show's host, would join the questioning. At one point he asked Johnsson what the fundamental beliefs statement about the Spirit of Prophecy means when it refers to Ellen White as "a continuing and authoritative source of truth."

Johnsson: I think it means we should take her seriously.

Ankerberg: How seriously?

Johnsson: Just as we would any gift of the Spirit Adventists take her writings seriously; we feel they have instruction for us.

Ankerberg (quoting from Neal Wilson's 1980 General Conference keynote address): "There must be a renewal of personal Bible study and family worship. A reemphasis of Bible preaching and teaching, supported and strengthened by enlightenment that comes from the study of the inspired and authoritative writings of Ellen White, is necessary."

"Why necessary?" Ankerberg asked.

Johnsson: I wish he [Neal Wilson] were here tonight

But Wilson and fourteen other Adventist leaders had rejected Ankerberg's invitations. Wilson, however, approved and was kept abreast of Johnsson's plans to appear. Johnsson

said he accepted the invitation gladly as an opportunity to represent the church in a way that he felt Walter Rea and Desmond Ford in their earlier Ankerberg Show appearances had not.

Johnsson continually found himself on the defensive, because Martin and Ankerberg were so well-acquainted with Adventist literature. As soon as Johnsson had described the format of a typical Sabbath School Quarterly lesson ("question, text of Scripture, comments, quotations; you may find a quotation from Ellen White or you may not") to support a primary Adventist reliance on Scripture, Ankerberg quoted from the April-June 1976 Quarterly, page 92:

"How advantaged the SDA church is to have a modern inspired interpreter of both the Old and New Testaments. Surely there is every logical reason to give the inspired interpretations top priority in arriving at our understanding of the Word today."

"Well, that's only one statement," Johnsson replied. "You asked for practice."

When Martin read from Ellen White that the General Conference when in session is God's highest constituted authority on earth, the *Review* editor's response was to emphasize "in session; in session!"

Johnsson and Martin disagreed about Glacier View, with Johnsson asserting that Ford was judged by Mrs. White's interpretation of Scripture. Johnsson retorted, "Walter, I was there; I didn't see you there."

Martin never quit asking to what extent Ellen White's interpretation of Scripture is authoritative for Adventists. And Johnsson kept saying that only the 27 Statements of Fundamental Beliefs were authoritative. But Martin posed quite a problem for that argument by quoting from the *SDA Encyclopedia* (p. 673):

"The best presentation summary of the SDA view of the investigative judgment in current Adventist literature is the chapter entitled 'The Investigative Judgment' in the book *The Great Controversy* by Ellen G. White, from which the following summary sentences were taken"

Eventually Johnsson seemed to acquiesce a bit to Martin's assertion that Adventist literature is "a morass of contradictions," and his complaint that "we love you as a Christian brother, but we can't work together while the men in Washington talk out of both sides of their mouths." Said Johnsson:

"Our church leaders need to speak more carefully — carefully in the sense of being precise, especially in sensitive areas But you know administrators are busy, and often they're not very much into theology, at least in terms of their advanced training." That's what Desmond Ford said.



Walter Martin and William Johnsson

Courtesy John Ankerberg Show

Ankerberg Program Schedule

(All times are local unless otherwise indicated)

*CBN CABLE NETWORK:		Sat., 11:30 P.M., (Eastern) *	May 11
4619 outlets nationwide to 26 million households — 70 million viewers			
*PTL SATELLITE NETWORK:		Wed., 10:30 P.M., (Eastern) *	May 29
1020 outlets nationwide to 10 million households — 27 million viewers			
CA:	Chico, KMPN-TV 10:	Sun., 8:00 P.M.	May 19
	Los Angeles, KSCI-TV 18:	Sun., 10:00 P.M.	October 20
	Modesto, VPN-TV 4:	Mon., 7:00 P.M.	May 27
	San Francisco, KSTS-TV 48:	Sun., 8:30 P.M.	July 28
	Santa Rosa, VPN-TV 13:	Mon., 9:00 P.M.	June 10
	Vallejo, VPN-TV 6:	Tue., 8:30 P.M.	May 21
FL:	Miami, WHFT-TV 45:	Sat., 8:00 P.M.	May 11
	Orlando, WTGL-TV 52:		
		Thurs., 8:30 P.M., Sun., 11:00 P.M.	July 25-28
GA:	Atlanta, VPN Cable 26:	Mon., 10:00 P.M.	May 20
IL:	Chicago, WCFC-TV 38:		
		Thurs., 8:00 P.M., Sun., 11:00 P.M., and Mon., 10:30 A.M.	May 16-19-20
	Marion, WTCT-TV 27:	Sat., 10:30 P.M.	June 22
	Peoria, GRACE TV:	Thurs., 6:30 P.M., Sun., 10:00 A.M.	June 23-27
KY:	Madisonville, WLCN-TV 19:	Sun., 10:30 P.M.	June 2
MI:	Grand Rapids, WXMI-TV 17:	Sun., 9:30 P.M.	August 4
MO:	Kansas City, KYFC-TV 50:		
		Sun., 4:30 P.M., Wed., 1:30 P.M.	June 2-5
	St. Louis, KNLC-TV 24:	Mon., 12:30 A.M.	June 10
NM:	Albuquerque, KCHF-TV 11:	Sat., 8:30 P.M.	May 18
OH:	Lima, WTLW-TV 44:	Mon., 6:30 P.M.	May 13
	Springfield, WTJC-TV 26:	Mon., 9:00 P.M.	May 13
	Westchester, WTCT-TV 27:	Sat., 10:30 P.M.	June 22
OR:	Portland, KECH-TV 22:	Sun., 9:00 P.M.	? ?
PA:	Pittsburgh, WPCB-TV 40:		
		Sun., 10:30 A.M. and 10:30 P.M.	May 19
SC:	Greenville, WGGS-TV 16:	Mon., 7:00 P.M.	June 3
SD:	Sioux Falls, Cable 12:	Sat., 10:30 P.M.	June 8
TN:	Chattanooga, WDSI-TV 61:	Sun., 9:30 P.M.	May 19
WA:	Seattle, VPN-TV 3, VPN-TV 32:	Sun., 10:30 P.M.	August 11
WI:	Milwaukee, WVCY-TV 30:		
		Fri., 6:30 P.M., Sun., 10:30 P.M.	June 2-7
	Suring, WSCO-TV 14:	Thurs., 7:30 P.M.	June 6

Johnsson himself needs to speak more carefully than he did on the Ankerberg Show when discussing Mrs. White's source usage: "On the amount. The amounts are ranging one percent, two percent, three percent. *Controversy* is the highest; it's probably nineteen percent in *Great Controversy*." In the 23 February 1984 *Adventist Review*, Johnsson had published White Estate secretary Robert Olson's statement that "50 percent or more" of *Great Controversy* "was drawn from other sources."

Nevertheless, the *Review* editor should receive high marks for both his courage and his naivete. But his experience may warn those Adventists who have fantasized about one day defending their faith before kings and potentates to pray that it remains just that — a fantasy.

Johnsson has admitted to his colleagues that it was a very trying experience, and the *Adventist Review* hasn't said very much about it, much less printed a schedule so that Adventists around the country can tune in. However, those who would like to learn from Johnsson's experience more than the old adage about nice guys should consult the schedule printed here. (Transcripts of the five segments [including the four Ford-Rea appearance transcripts] are available for a \$15.00 contribution; audio cassettes of the series can be acquired for a \$15.00 gift; and a video cassette package may be obtained for a donation of \$150.00.)

Send your request to The John Ankerberg Show, P.O. Box 8977, Chattanooga, Tennessee 37411.

Gardner's role as a self-appointed gadfly in the world of magicians, prophets, hypnotists, and the like has been sustained (as the Mormons say) by many of his readers. He is the little boy who can always be relied upon to point out that the emperor's in the buff.

The protagonist in his novel, Peter Fromm, goes to the University of Chicago in the heyday of Robert Maynard Hutchins and the liberals. Peter, who has been bred a fundamentalist in middle-class America, refuses to sit silently as most of his classmates do. He challenges his teachers and in the process makes friends of them. The neo-orthodoxy of Niebuhr comes in as a kind of halfway-house option in the days preceding WW II, and Peter does battle with its main tenets as well. He goes into the army, encounters the kind of sleaziness and squalor that accompanies war, and comes out as dissatisfied as ever with all of the conventional options in religion — but, apparently, never in any doubt that the game of putting them under the scrutiny of his x-ray mind is worth the candle.

In a world more intellectually honest than ours, Peter Fromm (or Martin Gardner) might have found a place in a church which had confidence enough in its footings to permit someone like him to dig around them. As it happens, few, if any, of our denominations or churches have a place for people who cannot and will not stop asking the hard questions. It is fortunate for us, his readers, that Gardner found himself a platform, perhaps even a pulpit, from which to expound his views to a large audience through the odd means of a puzzle column. I can recall faddists talking about agriculture evangelism, hot-fomentations evangelism, and even yacht evangelism; but probably no one ever made an apologia-puzzle-column evangelism.

Is it really an apologia? Is Martin Gardner really a man of faith? I know practically nothing about his personal life. I have read the summation of his general attitudes on philosophy and theology, *The Whys of a Philosophical Scrivener*, and done so with profit; but the amazing thing to me is that this book has also been as close to an "in" book as there is on the particular secular campus where I work. Even psychologists read it.

Gardner's characteristic approach is to show this hole in an argument here, that hole over there, and then to challenge the person who would dismiss the whole matter out of hand to think again. This was well exemplified when he reviewed his own *Scrivener* in the *New York Review of Books* under a pseudonym, the key to which was in a footnote.

It is easy to say lightheartedly that we will never have any surefire, irrefutable, unanswerable proofs for our religious beliefs; but faith comes in when, realizing this, we still take a firm stand for the faith, hope, and love that they are all about. Gardner is on the side of the angels. Adventists can be proud that he took sufficient notice of some of our sayings to submit them to his gimlet but kindly gaze.

The Fright of Martin Gardner

By Sydney Allen

The connection between Martin Gardner and the numerological claims on which many Adventists base their assertion that the movement arose to fulfill the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation is easy to document. Any connection between Gardner and the group of human beings that constitutes the Seventh-day Adventist church is more difficult to prove; but no reader of his novel, *The Flight of Peter Fromm* (Los Altos, California, W. Kaufmann, 1973), will need to be told that this writer knows what it is like, intellectually, to try to deal with modern thought and life from a fundamentalist, if not precisely Adventist fundamentalist, standpoint.

Gardner's fame as a writer stems, it seems to me, mostly from his column of mathematical puzzles and games that appeared in *Scientific American* for years. The popularity of this column was partly based on the deft unravelings of frauds and fallacies put forward under the color of science in support of various causes and enthusiasms, some of them religious. It seems not too unduly farfetched to speculate that Gardner might have encountered, perhaps during his youth, some Adventist who tried to convert him with the aid of unanswerable arguments erected on the year-day principle and the Roman numerical equivalents to be found in one of the titles of the pope.

Gardner is not antireligious, but he certainly is antifraud; and he is not adverse to a twinkle in the eye when he is able to unmask a religious fraud. To point out that the Roman numerals in the name of a certain prophetess can be added up to 666 as well as those in a papal title amounts to something of a coup in the old little world of pilpul, as the Jews call tournaments of text-slinging and casuistic debate.

The efforts of Gardner to unmask the delusions which are papered over by such thin stuff are in a worthy cause. I am doubly amazed when I encounter those who are still putting their trust in the 2300-day chart of the Roman numerals in *vicarious filii dei* — amazed (1) that they put their trust in such things and amazed (2) that I am amazed — I who also put my own trust in them and scored more than once in pilpul with Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and even liberal pastors of mainline churches. I should know better; I should realize that something taught as God's truth, that tends to enhance the feeling that one is in the right slot denominationally, is not going to be abandoned without a fight.

I have never come across anything by Martin Gardner — or, better, remembered it if I did come across it — that made the obvious point

that preoccupation with the geometry and plumbing system of the New Jerusalem, the biography of Melchizedek, and the identity of the 144,000 plays the same role in the life of the immature Christian that the novels of Barbara Cartland may play in the life of the immature person. (Please note that I resisted the temptation to write "woman" rather than "person.") And what is that role? Escape. Cartland, who turns out one frothy romance after another, supplies for her readers an alternative to facing reality. Likewise, preoccupation with the likes of Daniel 8:14 (manuscripts of hundreds of pages!) and the merits of such death traps as mixed swimming and going out to the movies can supply a satisfying alternative to facing corruption in one's denominational bureaucracy.

In the wake of the slave revolts and abolition agitation of the 1830s, serious discussion of the slavery question split three of the major

American denominations: Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian. I can remember the thrills of terror I used to feel as a boy when the conference evangelist would break out of his "beast props," supplement them with lurid slides, and undergird them all by reference to the news from Europe in flames. Since then I have met a number of people who have said that they were "turned off" by those visual aids. I cannot say that I was, but it seems clear that most of the people who first saw the charts and diagrams and beast props found them more interesting (or at least diverting) than they found the shouting matches over whether to oppose or accept slavery and whether to take a strong or weak stand in either direction. What a relief to turn away from the octopus-like social problems caused by slave-powered industry and consider, instead, the mathematics, if not of salvation, of at least picking the correct church!

The Number of the Beast — Prophet or Pope?

E L L E N		V I C A R I U S	
	50		5
	50		1
			100
G O U L D		F I L I I	
	5		1
	50		50
	500		1
			1
W H I T E	10	D E I	
			500
	1		1
	666		666

These numbers are derived by summing the letters of the names that are Roman Numerals: V and U = 5 (W, or double-U represents two Vs), I = 1, L = 50, C = 100, and D = 500.

Sydney Allen is assistant professor of philosophy at San Bernardino Valley College.

(concluded on page 35)

CURRENTLY POSTED

Dear Mr. Hackleman:

It has been a very interesting experience for me to read the lengthy reprint of Dr. Couperous' article, "The Significance of Ellen White's Head Injury." I was not aware of Ellen White as the "prophetess" of the Seventh-day Adventist church; nor was I aware of the interesting life she lived as described by Dr. Couperous. It seems to me that her behavior is a unique case report that would interest psychiatrists more than epileptologists. Most of the behavior patterns described throughout her life sound more like the actions of a self-absorbed egomaniac than the obsessive activity of a dependent personality, [which is] typical of temporal lobe epileptics. Hence, I find Dr. Couperous' paper an interesting account of an unusual woman, but I don't feel that the "visions" and "directives" from God to Ellen White sound like any of the cognitive alterations well-documented in the literature on partial complex seizures. Rather, I interpret Ellen White's "visions, etc." as her own complex constructions designed to establish herself as unique among a religious group. There are no well-documented cases of temporal lobe epileptics having such complex cognitive auras, such repeated themes ("God-visions") over decades, and such varied interictal behavior (i.e., so-called hypergraphia, hypermorality, hyposexuality). Parts of these behavior patterns may be present in a single epileptic; however the overall behavior of Ellen White seems to be very willful, egotistical, and even devious in some respects (e.g., her plagiarisms). Despite all my personal reservations about the validity of a diagnosis of temporal lobe epilepsy, the apparent facts that Ellen White suffered a severe head injury that left her "comatose" for three weeks and the delayed onset of her "visions" six years after the head injury are indicators of the possibility of an "epileptic" infarct. The delayed onset is more "diagnostic" than the severity of the injury or the length of her coma. In conclusion, I feel that while it is possible that Ellen White's adolescent head injury led to partial complex epilepsy, the lack of any clear references to behavioral seizures typical of psychomotor attacks suggests that her "visions" were not sub-clinical seizures or auras. Rather the prolonged recovery and tangled personal history of Ellen White seems more consonant with a woman trying to capture and hold recognition and respect in her life after years of pain and incapacity. Because Ellen White describes only "visions" and "dreams", it is unlikely that these were associated with seizure activity in the brain. It is far more parsimonious to conclude that she had compensatory psychiatric problems.

Dr. Couperous refers to many other papers; however he does not compare his work to previous articles which have attempted to diagnose the "epilepsy of geniuses," the most famous being Dostoevsky. In two recent papers

published five years apart, Henri Gastaut diagnosed Dostoevsky as suffering from primary generalized seizures followed by ecstatic prodromes (H. Gastaut, "Fyodor Mikhailovitch Dostoevsky's involuntary contribution to the symptomatology and prognosis of epilepsy," *Epilepsia* 1978; 19:186-201); whereas P. H. A. Voskuil concluded that Dostoevsky suffered from temporal lobe seizures preceded by an ecstatic aura and [that he] also had secondarily generalized nocturnal seizures rather than the primary generalized seizures documented by Gastaut (P. H. A. Voskuil, "The epilepsy of Fyodor Mikhailovitch Dostoevsky (1821-1881)" *Epilepsia* 1983; 24:658-667). I should add that Dostoevsky's behavioral seizures were well-documented in letters to and from his friends and in his own writings ("The Idiot", "The Possessed"). Using the above papers as models of literary "medical diagnosis," I find the arguments for Ellen White being epileptic to be very weak.

I'm sorry I can't be more definitive about this long article; however I am not impressed with the arguments. For example, if Ellen White had, in fact, ever suffered psychomotor seizures, she would have been preoccupied by the personal feelings and after-effects more than the "coherent" interpretation and prophecy that she conveyed after her many reputed "visions". If I can provide you with any further comments, please contact me.

Thomas Babb, Ph.D.
Professor of Neurology in Residence
Department of Neurology
University of California
Los Angeles, CA 90024

Dear Editor,

A careful reading of Crosier's *Day Star Extra* leads me to conclusions that differ significantly from those of Norman H. Young's letter to the Editor in the February issue of *Currents*.

Crosier's article says nothing about the shut door, if one reads it through the traditional glasses of denominational writers on the subject, beginning with A. G. Daniels and ending with Arthur White. Indeed these writers refused all evidences of this doctrine if the express term "shut door" was not used in the texts they examined. The term may not appear in the *Extra*, but the doctrine is there, unmistakably. Crosier's vocabulary and phraseology are consonant with a belief that forgiveness of sins was no longer possible during the antitypical Day of Atonement, and therefore it does not presuppose an open door but a shut one.

We grant that the shut door is not the central burden of the article, but it is assumed throughout. It is present especially in a passage which attacks the traditional Christian belief that Christ entered the heavenly Holy of Holies at his ascension (p. 41, cols. 1-2). Crosier's argument may be summarized as follows:

1. The veil of Hebrews 6:19-20 is the first veil, in front of the Holy Place.
2. If the cleansing of the sanctuary, or atonement, began at the ascension, then the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14 should have ended then, and not in 1844 (an impossibility for those who adopt the year-day principle).
3. If the antitypical Day of Atonement corresponds to the "Gospel Dispensation," then the atonement in the Holy Place, which must of necessity precede, was completed before the ascension. (Crosier gives his reasons for rejecting such a notion in cols. 2 & 3, p. 41.)
4. Atonement for the forgiveness of sins (his emphasis) is not a feature of the tenth day of the seventh month, according to Crosier. (This is a crucial argument, to which he will come back.) (See col. 2, ll. 2-6, p. 41.)
5. If the "Gospel Dispensation" is the antitype of the legal tenth day of the seventh month, then Christ has not come to "fulfill" but to destroy the law as type.
6. The last point being of considerable importance, it warrants quoting: "If the antitype of the yearly service (Heb. 9:7) began at the first Advent, the antitype of the daily (Heb. 9:6) had been previously fulfilled, and as the atonement for forgiveness was a part of that daily service, they are involved in the conclusion that there has been no forgiveness of sins under the Gospel Dispensation."

While considering inconsistencies in the traditional Christian position, Crosier inadvertently reveals his belief that when the atonement began in 1844, forgiveness of sins came to an end. This was his belief in 1846, even if in later reminiscences he affirmed the opposite. After he abandoned the shut door, he revised his understanding and claimed that personal pardon continued uninterrupted on the Day of Atonement, because the high priest did not occupy the Holy Place for the whole day, thus enabling priests to continue the service for individuals (see *The Daily Messenger* Nov. 22, 1923, pp. 22, 23). This overlooked detail of the *Extra* justifies Crosier's self-acknowledged belief in the shut door. He expressly recognized having held that doctrine until January 1848 (*Advent Harbinger* Sept. 30, 1848).

But we can detect the same doctrine in another passage of the *Extra*. On page 43, column 3 and page 44, column 1, Crosier makes the Millerite "Midnight Cry" coincide with the sounding of the seventh trumpet of Revelation 10, and with the message of the angel to the Philadelphia Church (Rev. 3:7-8), which still offered an open door. But this cry at midnight was to be given with the solemn assurance of an angelic oath that "there should be time no longer," and that the mystery of God (which he interprets as the Gospel) should be finished (Rev. 10:6-7). This whole scenario points to Crosier's belief that no proclamation of the Gospel was to follow the Midnight Cry.

Norman Young's analysis of Crosier's dispensational scheme is most lucid and accurate, but the conclusions he draws are not justified by the total context. Extending the Gospel Dispensa-

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tion to the Second Advent does not, in Crozier's eyes, imply the extension of forgiveness of sins beyond 1844, as proven above. There is simply no forgiveness of sin as a feature of the Day of Atonement. The overlapping period between the Gospel Dispensation and the Age to Come was essential to explain why Christ had not yet come in 1846, and to give the shut doorists an opportunity to gather the forgiven "little flock" that had been scattered by the failure of the Millerite prediction. The Gospel Dispensation may continue until the Advent, but the "mystery of God" is finished; there is no unlimited welcome for all.

The conflicting ideas evident in the *Extra* stem from the impossibility of harmonizing the premillennialism of the Millerites with the post-millennialism of Crozier's dispensational background. Crozier had not yet worked out these inconsistencies. We should notice that the *Extra* seems to be the first Crozier document to include a dispensational scheme. It seeks to incorporate the Millerite experience but without awareness of the contradictions involved. Wesley Ringer's letter in the same issue of *Currents* most convincingly proves Crozier to be a staunch believer in the shut door at this time, and the documents confirm it.

Unlike Mrs. White's late recollections, Crozier's reminiscences in 1853 and 1899 cannot be accused of lacking candor. It was not misleading to imply that his *Extra* article supports the shut door, even if the shut door was not the main point of the article.

I find Norman Young's burden puzzling for several reasons. Is he trying to save Mrs. White's prophetic endorsement of the *Extra* by laundering the shut door out of it? This is clearly impossible. Almost all of Crozier's extant writings up to that time place him firmly in the shut-door camp. Ellen White approved the *Extra* precisely because it did not oppose the shut door, just as she openly denounced those who opened the door. She also saw in it a seemingly solid scaffolding for the ideas launched by Hale and Turner the year before. She was for anything that might solve the Millerite predicament and legitimize the conviction that God had a direct hand in that movement.

Moreover, I cannot help wondering why Dr. Young still finds anything worth endorsing in both Ellen White and O.R.L. Crozier's reading of the Epistle to the Hebrews. I have just studied his recent article, "The Gospel According to Hebrews 9," in *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981), pp. 198-210. His conviction that *Ta Hagia* in this epistle "refers unequivocally to the Holy of Holies, heaven itself, the presence of God," clearly invalidates the pioneers' position. Moreover, his scholarly work goes beyond anything I have seen in print to put in question the Adventist position. Witness the last point of his conclusion:

Fifthly, that the sacrifice (prosphorá) of Christ which inaugurates this eschatological

new covenant order admits of no extension of his offering into the heavenly realms. The writer, in an absolutely singular way within the Greek Bible, uses prosphorá of the Levitical sprinkling within the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement (Heb. 9.7); but this is to inform us that Christ's prosphoréin on the cross fulfils this typical aspersion, not to indicate some heavenly oblation (p. 210).

We are all indebted to Dr. Young for the eminent scholarship he has published in theological journals, but we are anxious to hear how he assesses the Adventist tradition as it interprets the levitical system and the epistle to the Hebrews. The Adventist church is in great need of Dr. Young's guidance.

Fernand Fisel
University of Indiana
Indiana, Pennsylvania

Dear Editor,

Firstly, let me say how much I appreciated Wes Ringer's irenic reply (*Adventist Currents*, February 1985, p. 59) to my comments on his article which had appeared in the previous issue. Secondly, may I point out that a printer's omission was made in my letter, which obscures its sense. After "began in A.D. 1844" (second to last line in paragraph two) read, "Since he also maintained that no atonement for forgiveness was made on this day, it was easy to conclude that he taught that no forgiveness was available after A.D. 1844, which of course is the shut door doctrine." Having thus made these two necessary responses, I cannot resist, while I'm at it, making a comment on Wes Ringer's reply.

I am not convinced that all the examples that Ringer assembles teach the shut door. For instance, writing in a journal does not necessarily align one with the views of the editor(s) — I hope! Furthermore, the two items referred to by Ringer that were published prior to the *Day Star Extra*, February 7, 1846 — namely, Crozier's letters in *The Voice of Truth and Glad Tidings*, October 29, (Ringer has 21, the date it was written), 1845, and in the *Day Star*, October 11, 1845 — do not teach the shut door. Both letters defend the proposition that Jesus' atonement is in two "grand divisions," and that this position affirms the A.D. 1844 date without recourse to "spiritualizing." It was the "spiritualizing" interpretation of some Millerites that was such a concern to Joseph Marsh, the editor of *Voice of Truth*, and Ms. E. C. Clemons, the editor of *Hope Within the Veil*.

Accordingly, when Crozier spoke of Ms. Clemons' retrograde step, he had in mind her abandonment of the coming of Christ to the Father: she spoke of the Bible teaching "one second coming" whereas Crozier maintained that there were two (i.e., to the Father as Bridegroom in the heavenly holiest and to the believer as Lord on earth). Crozier argued that

his dual atonement view preserved a literal coming of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary (also literal) as opposed to a spiritual coming to the believer, with its accompanying excesses. He said nothing in this connection about mercy ceasing when Jesus entered the holiest. Thus the two items that Ringer quotes which date prior to the appearance of the *Day Star Extra* only argue for the beginning of the annual atonement in the most holy place; they do not argue for the cessation of the daily atonement. This is in line with the later position which Crozier took in the *Day Star Extra*.

Crozier was not only a little inconsistent in his positions, as Ringer observes, but also constantly changing — and in quick time. Notice how in his *Day Star* letter of October 11, 1845, he is uncertain about the state of the martyrs now that, as he supposed, the millennium had begun; but a few months later in the *Day Star Extra* he has the "Age to Come" theory well developed. At first he applied the phrase "within the veil" (Heb. 6:19) to Christ's entrance into the heavenly holiest, but three months later he referred the same text to Christ's ascension into the outer apartment of the heavenly sanctuary (see J. B. Goodner, "Reviewing the Review," *Adventist Currents*, February 1985, p. 5). One must read each statement on its merits, therefore, and not overly systematize such a fluid thinker. To get the shut door position out of the *Day Star Extra* requires a lot of forced interpretation.

We should remember that for most of the 1840s Crozier expected the return of Christ to occur within months, not years or decades, never alone centuries. His complaint against Ms. Clemons had as much to do with her abandonment of this extreme imminentism by announcing her intention to marry Mr. C. H. Pearson as with anything else. The reason Crozier supported the A.D. 1844 date so passionately after the disappointment was because for him it was the crucial proof for the expectation of Christ's soon return. In other words, one must be careful in this period of assuming that defense of the date A.D. 1844 also embraced a conscious defense of the shut door idea.

We should also be fair and note that Ellen White endorsed the *Day Star Extra*, not any other statement of Crozier's (Goodner, *Currents* Feb. 1985, p. 5). She accepted its view on the literal heavenly sanctuary, the two divisions of Jesus' heavenly ministry of atonement, and the entrance of Jesus into the heavenly holiest on the antitypical Day of Atonement (i.e., A.D. 1844). She did not accept the "Age to Come" theory which it did teach, but she did accept the shut door view which it did not teach.

Ringer sees his reference to Ellen White's endorsement of Crozier's article as "only one small link in a well-documented chain of evidence." I think it is a weak link and that the chain is the stronger without it.

Norman H. Young
Senior Lecturer in New Testament
Avondale College
Cooranbong, N.S.W.
Australia

Dear Editor,

For those among us who have studied more deeply into the methods and procedures of the late Medieval Inquisition, into French criminal justice and the use of *la question* (judicial torture) up to 1788, and into the techniques of extracting "evidence" adopted by the Nazi S.S. and Gestapo in our own century, your lengthy article on "Lynching at Orlando Central" brings disturbing news. Could it be that our reluctance to use Robert's Rules of Order in some local churches is due to the fact that it follows English Common Law and parliamentary procedures, which assume one is innocent until proved guilty? In matters of doctrinal divergence, many seem to adopt Roman legal philosophies accepted in France after the twelfth century: that the mere taint of suspicion makes one inherently guilty until innocence can be proven.

This transcript of the September 8, 1984, meeting should be useful to several groups: pastors on how *not* to conduct a church meeting; communications majors on the effective use of propaganda, name-calling and the bandwagon technique; behavioral science majors on how to manipulate language to achieve desired effects; and Dale Carnegie course graduates on how to win friends and influence people while maintaining one's membership within the church.

If there is a silver lining around this sordid affair, I remain profoundly thankful for the calm voice of reason expressed by some (Nelson Acosta, Jim Alford, Frank Palmour, and Madeline Gloss, among others) during this session, and hope that before many more such Adventist *autos da fe* occur, we can see such a KKK mentality replaced by concerned, caring Christ-likeness ("CCC"). Otherwise, I fear, we shall go on working like the devil for the Lord.

Sincerely,

Brian E. Strayer
Asst. Professor of History
Andrews University

Dear Editor,

Regarding the transcript of the Orlando Central Church's "lynching," as reported in issue #5 of *Currents*, obviously the defenders of the faith do not read the general church paper! The *Adventist Review* on December 20, 1984, on page 17 (reporting on Annual Council actions) reports an amendment to the church manual, saying "a letter of resignation should be presented to the church board and the request be acted upon at a duly called business meeting of the church *without* (underlining supplied) public discussion."

Notwithstanding, it certainly did provide a good evening's entertainment for me! Thanks.

Cordially,

Pastor Ken Wilson
Augusta, Georgia

Dear Editor,

I was intrigued by your reported practice of de-emphasizing an impasse by saying, "Well, at least we love the same Lord."

That's a nice thing to say, and in an absolute sense, it's true. Of course, it's false on the level of perception, where everyone lives. I have observed that authoritarian people see God as authoritarian; the intolerant see Him as intolerant, the generous see Him as generous; the strict see Him as strict; the broadminded see Him as broadminded, etc.

It seems to me that on subjects religious, an impasse often comes not from the overt subject matter but from the covert underlying views of the characteristics of God (which usually include inflexibility). These characteristics are usually an extrapolation of the person's own character.

It's a vicious cycle that legitimizes itself. The picture of God comes from my own mind. Since God and I see eye to eye, and God is the ultimate authority figure, it follows that everything I believe or do has God's approval. Therefore, why should I compromise with anyone else, who is obviously wrong?

I think EGW was onto something when she pointed out that people become like those they worship and admire. Every parent has seen that principle in action. But the principle is true, whether the God you worship is friendly or not, broadminded or exacting, gentle or severe, reasonable or arbitrary.

So go ahead and say, "At least we love the same Lord," as long as you realize it's probably not true. It might soften your friend's defensiveness and send a message of conciliation, though, which is no small matter.

Sincerely,

R. E. Cook
Boring, Oregon

Dear Editor,

I received a copy of *Adventist Currents* this week and I just want to write and tell you my feelings.

Reading the magazine, I do not have any idea what your Christian ideas are. Your magazine is just fault finding and I would not be interested in belonging to an organization that published a paper just to point the faults of others.

I feel the word *Christian* means *Christ-like*; and as far as I am concerned, your magazine does not reflect Christ.

If you have a message, you should be spending your money on that message — telling of Christ, not the faults of others. If you do not like an organization, then join another or start your own; but do not fault-find other organizations.

Sincerely,

A Christian Friend
[Orlando postmark,
no return address]

Dear Editor,

The Adventist church is not perfect. No earthly institution can be. A little bit of dissention is healthy for growth; but a magazine like yours, which is sarcastic and totally negative and bent on the destruction of an organization, is not healthy. Nothing is worse than destruction from the inside, and that is one of the strongest tools the devil can use.

In the future, if I receive any literature or letters or magazines from you, they will be tossed in the garbage without being read as I feel your mission is an evil one. What a shame that your professionally put together magazine cannot build up the church in the least, but is tearing it down in the worst way.

We are praying that the Holy Spirit will work in your heart to put your energies to a positive use.

Sincerely,

David and Pamela Parker
Davie, Florida

Dear Editor,

From the time that I was old enough to have favorite authors, I had a hobby of writing letters to them and collecting their answers. I have letters from Faith Baldwin, June Strong (a Seventh-day Adventist author), Gladys Taber, Angela Thirkell, Kathleen Norris, Elizabeth Goudge — and Upton Sinclair.

In 1954, shortly after I had read *Another Pamela*, I got cheeky and wrote to Sinclair, who was living at that time in Corona, California. I asked him how it was that he knew so much about Seventh-day Adventists. I am enclosing a photocopy of his letter to me, which confirms what you wrote in your review of his book.

Sincerely yours,

Helen Wells Hawley

Route 2, Corona, California
June 29, 1954

Dear Mrs. Hawley:

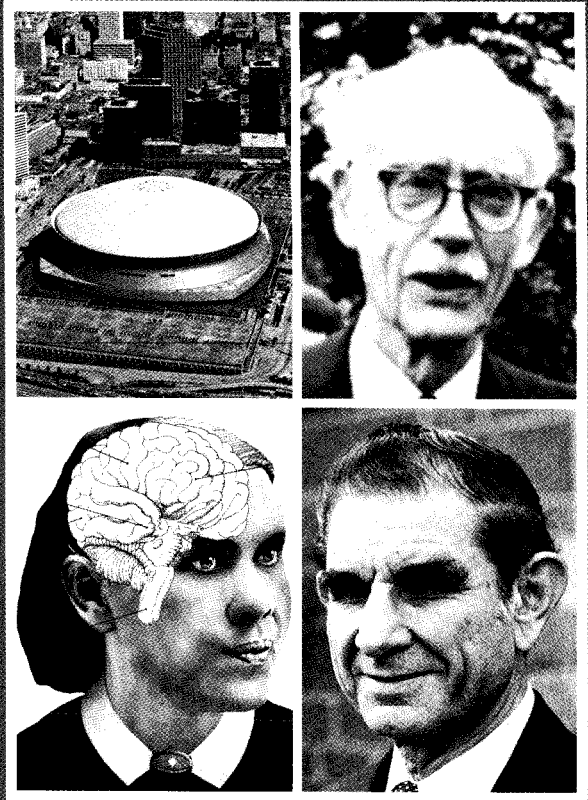
Thanks for your kind letter.

I spent some time in Battle Creek San in 1908 and never forgot the kind and good people there. About 10 years ago I had a young couple, Adventists, as secretary (the wife) and general helper. They hoped to convert me and gave me their literature; and their Pamela.

Sincerely,

U. Sinclair

Editor's note: Ruth Howard Mitchell, Sinclair's secretary and model for Pamela, attended La Sierra College from 1945-1947 and took one class in 1949-50. Her husband, Lewis E. Mitchell, also attended La Sierra College.



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