

# Analysis of — The 1919 Bible Conference

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***In January 1994, Charles Wheeling sent out 1919 Bible Conference extracts, in the hope that it would win many historic believers over to his liberal view of the Spirit of Prophecy. This material has been circulated for a number of years by new theology liberals in our church; now it is being recommended by an Independent Ministries leader! Woe be to those who take their stand with such men; ere long they will lose their way and go into irretrievable deception.***

***When we forsake confidence in God's Inspired Word, we do not have much left. There are individuals today who are trying to steal your crown. Beware.***

***In this study, we will reply to specious reasoning in this document. But we will also take note of those statements which are correct and well-stated. It is our prayer that this will provide you with a better understanding of the Spirit of Prophecy, its origin, nature, and inspiration. How thankful we can be that we have those books! They are a wonderful blessing given us by the God of heaven.***

The packet of information which Wheeling sent out in January consisted of four items: (1) An au-

diotape of a November 1993 sermon, "Do Mirrors Ever Lie?" It was delivered to the staff of his Countdown Ministries at its headquarters in Jemison, Alabama, amid hearty comments of approval from his listeners. In it, Wheeling used subtle and quite false reasoning in an effort to show that the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy are unreliable, contain only a relatively small amount of genuine truth, and that we should instead hope that, somehow, we can get light directly from God. We gave a detailed, two-tract reply to that sermon in "Wheeling's Latest Attack on the Spirit of Prophecy" [WM—532-533].

(2) A copy of the Prescott Letter. That letter has been circulated widely by liberal Adventists ever since 1980. In "The Prescott Letter" [WM—534], not only do we reply to the three charges leveled by Prescott in that letter, but we provide you with the historical background of the letter, which explains why W.W. Prescott wrote it.

(3) A copy of excerpts from the 1919 Bible Conference. An analysis of that study will occupy much of this present tract set.

(4) A brief two-page letter by David Dence, entitled "Shall We Throw Out the Baby?" We will consider the essential points of that letter at the end of this present tract set.

## — PART 1 —

### THE 1919 BIBLE CONFERENCE

There have been four Bible Conferences in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. The first was held in 1919, the second in 1952, the third in 1974, and the fourth in 1980.

The 1919 Bible Conference convened in Washington, D.C. from July 1 to 21 of that year. It was a closed-door conference and was attended only by denominational Bible and history teachers, editors, and members of the General Conference Committee. Although a wide variety of doctrinal topics were there discussed, in recent years excerpts from just one section of that conference have clandestinely passed from hand to hand. These are the transcribed pages from a discussion held during an hour or so one day. The topic was the Spirit of Prophecy.

It has been the liberals who have circulated those pages, for they reveal that many of our leaders did not fully believe in the Spirit of Prophecy in 1919.

Because this material continues to circulate widely, and because one Independent Ministries leader (Charles Wheeling) is now mailing it broadcast to historic believers in an effort to weaken their faith in the Spirit of Prophecy, we will here analyze this material.

In the process, we will gain a clearer conception of how the God of heaven inspires and guides His chosen prophet in the presentation of messages.

Throughout the portion of the Bible Conference

which we have, many of the questions were directed toward A.G. Daniells, the General Conference president, but a variety of comments and answers ricocheted back and forth between various others assembled there. As a rule, they were quite guarded in what they said, so as not to appear to disagree with the prevailing sentiments. Yet there were those who hinted at decidedly anti-Spirit of Prophecy concepts.

As we progress through this analysis, it will become obvious that it was not the Spirit of Prophecy which was on trial that day, but our leaders. So it is today; we will all be judged by what we have done or have not done with those special books.

The Spirit of Prophecy has not changed nor will it change; it is as solid a counselor today to those willing to humbly seek for a knowledge of God's will in its pages, as it was back in 1919. All the questions and quibblings of men will not injure these special writings; all they hurt is themselves.

In this analysis, we will arrange the material under several basic topics which were discussed. The word, "Testimonies," is used in a general sense for all the published Spirit of Prophecy writings.

### **IS THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY USEFUL IN HELPING US UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?**

#### **1919 Bible Conference positions:**

*C.L. Taylor:* "May we accept the explanations of Scripture that she gives? Are those dependable?"

*A.G. Daniells:* "Must we go to her explanations to get our meaning of the Bible? Is that the question?"

*C.L. Taylor:* "Is it right for them in their study of that [Bible] text to bring in the Spirit of Prophecy to aid in their understanding of it or should they leave that out of the question entirely?"

*A.G. Daniells:* "We are to get our interpretation from this Book [the Bible], primarily. I think that the Book explains itself, and I think we can understand the Book, fundamentally through the Book, without resorting to the Testimonies [all the Spirit of Prophecy writings] to prove it up."

*A.G. Daniels:* "It is not our position, and it is not right that the Spirit of Prophecy is the only safe interpreter of the Bible. That is a false doctrine, a false view. It will not stand. Why, my friends what would all the people have done from John's day down to the present if there were no way to understand the Bible except through the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy! . . . What do those people do over in Romania? We have hun-

dreds of Sabbathkeepers there who have not seen a book on [of] the Spirit of Prophecy! What do those people in China do? . . . He [God] gave this Book, and He gave men brains and thinking power to study the Book."

#### **Our position:**

Let us begin by establishing a base point: All divinely inspired writings are equal to one another. They are equal in origin, amount of inspiration, and accuracy. Amos is equal to Isaiah, Mark is equal to Revelation. 2 John is equal to Genesis.

But, of course, each one covers different content, so their applicable usefulness will vary. Of the above, we use Isaiah, Revelation, and Genesis far more than Amos, Mark, or 2 John.

Yet they are equally inspired, and therefore equally accurate.

In what way is Isaiah more useful than Amos? It has a far wider coverage of topics.

What is the Spirit of Prophecy? That is the name we give to the writings of E.G. White. Those writings are a set of written materials which are as inspired as any book in the Old or New Testament.

There is no such thing as partial inspiration. God *guides* you and I by His Spirit, but He *inspires* His prophets by that Spirit. There is immense difference between guidance and inspiration.

What is the difference? Obviously, it is accuracy of concept. You and I may and can frequently be guided by God in what we say and write. Yet we very frequently make mistakes. Prophets only rarely make mistakes. More on this later in this study. Accuracy in concept—divinely given concepts—is what divine inspiration is all about. It is not the amount of what was said or written or the topic discussed that is pivotal here.

How does the Spirit of Prophecy relate to the Bible prophets? Ellen White was one among many prophets, equal to all the rest in every way but three. In three ways she was quite different.

*The first difference* was that she lived in these last days of history. None of the other prophets did. Because of that, God could give her special counsels to share with those living at the end of time about crucial issues to be confronted today. For example, the Bible tells us very little about the nature of Christ. What is said is clear enough, but it does not discuss the matter very much. The Spirit of Prophecy discusses the subject hundreds of times. Why? Because the nature of Christ would be a special crisis topic in these last days.

*The second difference* is that she wrote far more than any other prophet. In her published books

alone, there is about seven times as much material.

The third difference is that she wrote about nearly every topic addressed in the Bible, plus many more. If you question that, read *Great Controversy, Education, Evangelism, Welfare Ministry, Counsels to Parents and Teachers, Medical Ministry, Selected Messages, the Testimonies*, and many, many more of her books. Although the principles are all in the Bible, the specific applications and details are far wider than is to be found anywhere in the Old or New Testaments.

Which recalls to mind something we noted earlier: Why do we consider Isaiah to be more important to us than Amos? because there is so much more coverage and such wider coverage in Isaiah. Yet both books are fully inspired, and thus a statement in Amos is just as divinely given as a statement in Isaiah. On that basis alone, the Spirit of Prophecy ought to be considered as of paramount importance; a much-needed addition to the prophetic writings. Yet prophets are a reproof to sin. The Bible prophets were hated and maligned, and so is the prophet of the last days.

In the above-quoted statements by our leaders at the 1919 Conference, they questioned among themselves whether the Spirit of Prophecy could be of any valid use when they studied the Bible. Yet, would Isaiah be of any help in studying Amos? Of course, it would. Why? Because it is also inspired Scripture, and it contains much, much more information than Amos. Would the Spirit of Prophecy help us understand a text of Scripture? Of course it would. Would there be anything wrong in using it for that purpose? Well, is there anything wrong with using Scripture to understand Scripture? It is all equally inspired and profitable.

The question was asked in 1919 whether the Spirit of Prophecy was “dependable”? Yes it is,—as dependable as anything in the Bible. “Must we go to her explanations to get our meaning of the Bible?” Well, are you required to go to John in order to understand Matthew? No. No one is twisting your arm and telling you that you have to, but there are many insights in John which will help you understand Matthew better. This attitude of “Do we *have to* use the Spirit of Prophecy?” is both revealing and desolating. It reveals character and motive, and it ultimately ruins those who adhere to it. It recalls to mind the worldlings who say, “Do I have to study the Bible? Why can’t I go to the movies? What’s wrong with a little dancing?” There were leaders in 1919 who had the same attitude toward the Spirit of Prophecy: “Why do we have to use the Spirit of Prophecy? Why do our

students have to use it? Isn’t there some way we can all get out of it and away from it?” What a miserable religion, when people are paid to teach the Word of God to students or church members, yet they themselves do not want to do so!

Does the Bible “explain itself?” Of course it does. Why then use the Spirit of Prophecy to help understand it? because it is a powerful aid in understanding the words and will of God! Is not that a good enough reason? Why is it that men are so afraid of those books? The reason is that they contain very explicit guidance about sins to be put away, the urgency of putting them away, and the help from God to put them away. All excuse for holding on to cherished sin is removed.

“It is not right that the Spirit of Prophecy is the only safe interpreter of the Bible,” Daniells says. What other one is there? Yourself? Are you a safe interpreter? That is laughable. What is a safer interpreter than part of God’s Word, in trying to understand another part of God’s Word?

Ah, but there is another safe interpreter of the Bible: the Holy Spirit. Will he guide you in your study? Yes, if you are humble, desirous of knowing the truth, and willing to be taught. How will He guide you? He will guide you as you pray for help and compare Scripture with Scripture. Ah, but what if you are willing to read John when you want to better understand Matthew. You have your mind set against John. How much help will you get? What if, knowing about the Spirit of Prophecy, you refuse its counsel. Will you be aided as well as you might have been by the Holy Spirit?

One quibbler notes, “What would all the people have done from John’s day down to the present, if there were no way to understand the Bible except by the Spirit of Prophecy?” No problem here. They did not have the Spirit of Prophecy back then, so they were not accountable for not using it. The same goes with millions of Christians alive today. But what about you? You and I who know so much, will we be accountable for not using it?

So, should we use the Spirit of Prophecy interpretation of the Bible, or should we use our own? Study God’s Word in any way you wish, but know that when one part of the Word is commenting on another part, you have an inspired commentary. Should you set it aside, and instead use your own interpretation? Is your own interpretation inspired? The Holy Spirit will try to guide you in your study as fully as He is able, but you will not receive as much help if you knowingly ignore inspired counsel you could make use of.

## SHOULD THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

**BE USED IN REACHING NON-ADVENTISTS?****1919 Bible Conference positions:**

A.G. Daniells: "I do not think the best kind of proof for me to give an audience on the Sabbath question or the nature of man or baptism is to go and read Sister White's writings to them. I believe the best proof I can give is the Bible."

**Our position:**

Five points should be noted here:

[1] We should not quote the Spirit of Prophecy in support of doctrines or standards, when we are initially working with unbelievers. All our supporting points should come from the Bible. This position is strongly supported by the Spirit of Prophecy.

[2] It is well to quote inspirational statements (from *Desire of Ages*, etc.) in our verbal and written studies, as supplemental inspirational comments. We are not hereby using the Spirit of Prophecy to prove doctrine in our Bible studies, and we are acquainting the Bible study interest with those marvelous writings.

[3] Later in the Bible study, the interests should be given a carefully prepared study about the nature and importance of the Spirit of Prophecy. It should be supported by Bible statements, and by historical and biographical data about Ellen White.

[4] It is perfectly acceptable to share books written by Ellen White to those not of our faith. Such books as *Great Controversy*, *Desire of Ages*, *Ministry of Healing*, *Steps to Christ*, etc. are excellent for this purpose. In one passage in the *Testimonies*, she said to loan our copies of the *Testimonies* to our neighbors.

[5] In a chapter in the book, *Evangelism* (255-260) we find many Spirit of Prophecy statements on this topic. Several of them are repeatedly quoted by liberals in an attempt to show that Ellen White told us not to use her writings at all, nor quote from them to anyone. But those particular statements (256-257) are only discussing teaching our doctrines to those who have not yet accepted our faith. We should teach them from the Bible and not use the Spirit of Prophecy as "proof" for our positions.

Yet both before and after those statements, are found statements urging the importance of our own people studying the Spirit of Prophecy writings (255-260). In addition, we are told that the Spirit of Prophecy books should be given to unbelievers, so they can read themselves into the faith.

**IS THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY  
AN INFALLIBLE INTERPRETER?****1919 Bible Conference positions:**

A.G. Daniells: "I have heard ministers say that the Spirit of Prophecy is the interpreter of the Bible . . ."

J.M. Anderson: "And he also said 'infallible interpreter.'"

C.M. Sorenson: "That expression has been canceled. That is not our position."

A.G. Daniells: "It is not our position."

A.G. Daniells: "Now on infallibility. I suppose Sister White used Paul's text, 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels,' as much as any other scripture. She used to repeat that often, 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels,' with the idea that she was a poor, feeble woman, a messenger of the Lord trying to do her duty and meet the mind of God in this work.

"When you take the position that she was not infallible, and that her writings were not verbally inspired, isn't there a chance for the manifestation of the human? If there isn't, then what is infallibility? And should we be surprised when we know that the instrument was fallible, and that the general truths, as she says, were revealed; then aren't we prepared to see mistakes?"

**Our position:**

There is no mystery about infallibility. It is merely accuracy in concept. In regard to Scripture: It is accuracy in concept, but clothed in human words.

Is Scripture accurate in its concepts about divine truths? Think about that for a minute. You see, all the basic acceptances or denials we apply to the Spirit of Prophecy also apply to the Bible. That is why, when people are convinced by liberals that they should throw out the Spirit of Prophecy, those same people often later throw out morals, religion, and Christianity. Trying to get rid of the Spirit of Prophecy leads one to eventually abandon the Bible also. Both have the highest standards and the purest beliefs. It is a dangerous thing to knowingly run away from either one.

Because of its truths, its standards, and doctrinal teachings, the Spirit of Prophecy is judging us; we are not judging it.

To the degree which the Bible is infallible, the Spirit of Prophecy is also—but with one exception: The Bible has gone through centuries of copyists and translation, whereas, in the English-speaking world, we have the Spirit of Prophecy exactly as it was written. For the most part it is best that

Continued on the next tract

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Continued from the preceding tract in this series

we ignore that fact. Yet it is nonetheless true. We in these last days ought to be more thankful for the Spirit of Prophecy than we are.

Is Scripture infallible? The modernists among us like to quote a passage in the Spirit of Prophecy (*1 SM, 16*) which, they say, shows that not even the Bible is infallible. But they misquote it. The passage says that mistakes were introduced into the text by copyists in the Dark Ages. She does not say that the mistakes were there in the original text of the Old or New Testament.

Men may declare that God's Word is not infallible, yet God's Word says it is: God's Word is infallible (*1 SM 416*). Zwingli regarded the Scriptures as an infallible rule (*GC 173-174, 177*). John Wycliffe viewed the Scriptures as infallible (*GC 89*). The distinctive doctrine of Protestantism was the infallibility of Scripture (*GC 173-174, 177; SR 337*). The Scriptures are an infallible revelation of God's will for mankind (*GC 7*). Surely, that should be enough statements to settle the matter.

So the point is simple enough: All Scripture is equally inspired; and if any of it is infallible, all of it is infallible.

The writings of a prophet are infallible concepts in earthen vessels.

Yet there are men among us who do not believe this. Too bad; it is their loss, and the loss of those they instruct in their error. Having cut loose from Scripture, such men are very fallible. Do not think your ideas and opinions are infallible (*TM 105*). No man is infallible (*TM 376*). Position never renders a man infallible (*9T 282*).

So if infallible means accuracy of concept, then both the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy are accurate in their concepts of God's will for your life. That makes them important books, very much worth your reading time.

## IS THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY VERBALLY INSPIRED?

We can nearly agree with the 1919 position on this point.

### **1919 Bible Conference position:**

A.G. Daniells: "You know, there are some brethren who go in all over. We could mention some old and some young who think they cannot

believe the Testimonies without just putting them up as absolutely infallible and word inspired, taking the whole thing as given verbally by the Lord. They do not see how to believe them and how to get good out of them except in that way; and I suppose some people would feel that if they did not believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, they could not have confidence in it."

A.G. Daniells: I hardly know where to begin or what to say. I think I must repeat this: that our difficulty lies in two points, especially. One is on infallibility and the other is on verbal inspiration. I think Brother James White foresaw difficulties along this line away back at the beginning. He knew that he took Sister White's testimonies and helped to write them out and make them clear and grammatical and plain. He knew that he was doing that right along . . . Yet he saw some brethren who did not know this, and who had great confidence in the Testimonies, just believing and teaching that these words were given to Sister White as well as the thought. And he tried to correct that idea. You will find these statements in the *Review*."

A.G. Daniells: "There is no use of our claiming anything more on the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies, because she never claimed it, and James White never claimed it."

D.A. Parsons: "She not only did not claim it, but she denied it."

A.G. Daniels: "Yes, she tried to correct the people."

M.E. Kern: "She was an author and not merely a pen."

### **Our position:**

We agree it is the thoughts, not the words, that are inspired. However, this is mingled with an erroneous view that Scripture is not infallible.

The problem is that those men correctly recognized that *concepts* could be inspired, but erred in imagining that only *words* could be infallible. The truth is that it is the *concepts* of the prophet which are both inspired and infallible, whereas the *words* of the prophet are not necessarily inspired nor infallible.

That was why Ellen White could write her materials, then have her secretaries work it over into good grammatical format, then return it to her for

final approval. As long as the concepts were stated accurately, the phrasing of each sentence was not as crucial.

Yet, although we fully agree with the view that the prophets have concept inspiration (also called *thought inspiration*) rather than each-word inspiration, yet it is remarkable how each word in the Spirit of Prophecy has been so beautifully selected! Every conscientious Spirit of Prophecy student recognizes this. In most instances, the words themselves are precisely what they ought to be. It was Ellen that initially set them down, and it was Ellen who checked them over and redid them in their final form. Part of the reason that some err in assuming word inspiration applies to the Spirit of Prophecy writings is because the words have been so well selected.

Why does God work through concept, rather than word, inspiration? Because He desires to work through thinking people, not automated machines. Word inspiration would be too exacting, and would overpower the human instrument in the preparation of the manuscript. The Word comes through the flesh. There is a mystery of incarnation, not only in Christ, the Word, but also in the other Word: Scripture.

### **HOW DID HER VIEW OF CONCEPT INSPIRATION AFFECT HER BOOK PREPARATION?**

#### ***The 1919 position:***

*A.G. Daniells:* "In Australia I saw the *Desire of Ages* being made up, and, I saw the rewriting of chapters, some of them written over and over and over again. I saw that, and when I talked with Sister [Marian] Davis about it, I tell you I had to square up to this thing and begin to settle things about the Spirit of Prophecy. If these false positions [about verbal inspiration] had never been taken, the thing would be much plainer than it is today."

#### ***Our position:***

Ellen White received an immense variety of important concepts from the Lord, and she labored under an intense burden to share them with the people. Getting the material into print was extremely important, and understandably so.

[1] In the early days, she would write letters to individuals, and then laboriously handwrite a copy which could later be printed as a testimony so still more could read it.

Sometimes James would proof her materials, with her final okay. This freed her to focus more on output, leaving the final grammatical touch-ups to him to care for.

[2] Later, especially after James' death in 1881, additional helpers joined her staff. Having several assistants helped her to greatly accelerate her production of written materials. She would write out the material and hand it to them. They would check it over and hand it back to her for final approval. Marian Davis proved to be a special helper. This brilliant young woman ransacked Ellen's earlier writings in order to find material suitable for inclusion in forthcoming books. For example, when *Ministry of Healing* was about to be written, Ellen outlined the general chapter topics. Then Marian set to work to locate everything she could find on each of those chapters—from earlier writings of Ellen. She would put it together and then present it to Ellen, who would then write the book, using part of her earlier materials, setting some aside and adding much, much more. Because of this, Ellen unabashedly called Marian her "bookmaker." It was during the period of time when Marian was with her (Marian died in 1904 of pneumonia) that some of the most important books were produced. Why? because each one contained the best of Ellen's earlier written materials on the topics covered.

There was nothing wrong with her having done that. Jesus taught: "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost." It was excellent organization, and we should be orderly and businesslike about our work. It was gathering up the fragments of her earlier writings, so that none of those earlier-stated concepts should be lost.

[3] Ellen approached historical writings in the same manner. She had received visions of historic events, but she had not been told when or where they had occurred.

So she searched through historical writings to find the events she had seen in vision. When she found a passage in D'Aubigne or Wylie which agreed with what she had seen, she would quote it. Frequently she would state it exactly as the historian had, for her concern was to get the truth out. She discusses this in the Introduction to *Great Controversy*. Yet by the turn of the century, there was a concern to place such data within quotation marks and cite the source. So, in preparation for the 1911 edition of *Great Controversy*, this was done.

In those historical books she found both concepts and events which had been given her earlier in vision. So she placed them in her books so many more could have this understanding made available to them.

### **HOW DID OUR EARLY PIONEERS GET THEIR DOCTRINES?**

## 1919 Bible Conference position:

L.L. Caviness: "Do you understand that the early believers got their understanding from the Bible, or did it come through the Spirit of Prophecy?"

A.G. Daniells: "They got their knowledge of the Scriptures as they went along through the Scriptures themselves. It pains me to hear the way some people talk, that the Spirit of Prophecy led out and gave all the instruction, all the doctrines, to the pioneers, and they accepted them right along . . ."

"They searched these scriptures together and studied and prayed over them, until they got together on them. Sister White says in her works that for a long time she could not understand, that her mind was locked over these things, and the brethren worked their way along."

## Our position:

A correct understanding of this matter is given in a passage in *1 Selected Messages*.

Ellen helped formulate our earliest doctrinal positions. Her approval repeatedly set the seal to them. But the largest number of our doctrines were initially settled at, what is known as, the *Sabbath Conferences of 1848*. Meeting, literally, in several barns in New England, a number of pioneers, including James and Ellen, tried to study out our fundamental beliefs from the Bible.

The problem here was that the Lord wants us to study, search, think, and pray for light. Yet He can only safely give us that guidance through His prophets. But, down through the centuries, so many errors had come into the churches that it seemed a hopeless task for any group to attempt to obtain a correct understanding of a variety of basic doctrines. Do you know of any group which has? I know of only one: the 1848 conference group. The reason they succeeded was providential. Throughout those meetings, it was clear to all that Ellen's mind was that year locked so that she could not grasp their reasonings or even understand basic doctrines. As they met together, they would go as far as they could, but each time they would arrive at a point where they could go no further. Ellen would then, in their presence, be taken off into vision and be shown the correct solution. Coming out of vision, she would relate it to the rest, and they would praise the Lord for the answer.

In this special manner the Lord had them earnestly study the Bible, pray earnestly for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, be given the correct solution through the Spirit of Prophecy, and thus develop a complete system of solid truth.

Read for yourself how it happened: *1 Selected*

*Messages, 206-208.*

## IS THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY HISTORICALLY ACCURATE?

### 1919 Bible Conference position:

W.W. Prescott: "How should we use the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy as an authority by which to settle historical questions?"

A.G. Daniells: Well, now, as I understand it, Sister White never claimed to be an authority on history."

C.A. Shull: "Just how shall we use the *Testimonies* in the classroom, especially? Before I knew there was any statement in the Spirit of Prophecy regarding the experience of John, I stated to the class that there was a tradition that John had been thrown into a caldron of boiling oil, and a student immediately produced that statement in the *Testimonies* that John was thrown into the boiling oil. Now, I want to know, was she given a divine revelation that John was thrown into the boiling oil?"

"Now another question, on the taking of Babylon. Mrs. White in the Spirit of Prophecy mentions that Babylon was taken according to the historian, by the turning aside of the waters. Modern scholarship says it was not taken that way. What should be our attitude in regard to such things?"

W.W. Prescott: "I would like to ask if you think that, after his writings had been published a series of years, Jeremiah changed them because he was convinced that there were historical errors in them?"

M.E. Kern: "I can not answer that."

A.G. Daniells: "I was called up here [to Washington Missionary College] twice to speak on the Spirit of Prophecy to the Bible and pastoral training classes. They brought up this question of history. I simply said, 'No, boys, Sister White never claimed to be a historian nor a corrector of history.'"

### Our position:

Ellen White did not claim to be a history expert, but only when we reach heaven will we learn that she wrote the most accurate historical accounts of past history. This was because she was shown those scenes in vision. Why will we not have certainty of her historical accuracy before then? The answer is simple enough: The historians cannot agree on all kinds of historical points. So we have no human norm by which to verify that which she wrote as the best history ever written.

Two points should be noted here:

First, historical and archaeological discoveries

may appear to disprove her writings, but, in reality, they will not. Her historical statements are correct; the discoveries may be in error. For a detailed study into the mammoth fake which modern archaeology has become since the late 1930s, in regard to dating, read the present writer's chapter on Archaeology" in his book, *Other Evidence Against Evolution*.

Second, Ellen White was not shown dates. This is why she had to search through the history books in order to locate some sequences. You will find few dates in *Great Controversy*. The events and concepts in that book are accurate, but some dates could be a year or two off.

### **WAS THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY DOCTRINALLY ACCURATE?**

#### **1919 Bible Conference position:**

Several nebulous charges are leveled against the Spirit of Prophecy, to the effect that others wrote her doctrinal statements.

#### **Our position:**

Ellen White was always in command of what went into her books, articles, letters, and other publications. She recognized her responsibility and did not shirk it. That is why God initially called her to the prophetic office. He knew she would remain faithful, and she did.

In vision, she received inspirational, doctrinal, and historical information. Most of the time, she wrote it out when the circumstances directed or as the Holy Spirit prompted her to do so. But, in some instances, she came across doctrinal sentences or paragraphs penned by others which were fairly clear statements. These she used as is, or modified in order to produce doctrinal accuracy. In certain portions of *Great Controversy*, it was discovered that additional, specific doctrinal statements were needed. She either produced this herself or statements by Uriah Smith, J.N. Andrews, and others were brought to her, which she then used as a basis for additional paragraphs.

Yet, throughout this, Ellen White was systematically doing that work which she had been called to do: place the concepts given her of Heaven into printed form for the people to read and benefit from.

### **SHOULD THE PHYSICAL EVIDENCES BE MENTIONED?**

#### **1919 Bible Conference position:**

C.L. Taylor: "In your talk a few evenings ago, I agreed 100 percent in everything you said. Today there is just one question in my mind."

A.G. Daniells: "Let us have it."

C.L. Taylor: "That is regarding those outward manifestations, those things of perhaps a miraculous nature. I do not know whether you intend to carry the impression that you discredit those or that you simply would not teach them. If it is that you would not hold them up as proof that the work is inspired, I am heartily in agreement with that. On the other hand, if you take the position that those things are not to be relied on, that Elder Loughborough and others are mistaken about these things, I should have to disagree with you."

A.G. Daniells: "No, I do not discount them nor disbelieve them; but they are not the kind of evidence I would use with students or with unbelievers."

#### **Our position:**

As the present writer was preparing the biography of Ellen White, for his book, *Prophet of the End*, it became quite obvious why Heaven gave the physical evidences when it did. Ellen had just been called to the prophetic office, and the primary new light she had been given consisted of views of heaven and reproofs of fanatics. But the people had the physical evidences. As she traveled about during those first few months and years, physical evidences were repeatedly given which convinced people she was a spokesperson for God. She was taken off in vision in public and did not breathe for a half hour or more. On more than one occasion, she held heavy Bibles at arm's length while pointing to texts she was not looking at.

These evidences were powerful, even astounding. And they were given by the God of heaven to convince us that this was His chosen prophet in these last days. Notice that they were given to those unacquainted with the Spirit of Prophecy writings. In later years, as a repertoire of those writings increased, most of the visions were given to her at night.

When we initially introduce the Spirit of Prophecy today, it is well that we also tell about her life, the fruits of her work, and those early physical evidences. Later, as these people read themselves into confidence in those sacred writings, they will no longer need the physical evidences to help arouse and sustain their faith.

Why is it that men are so anxious to place everything about the Spirit of Prophecy in the shade, where it will not be noticed—and more easily ne-

Continued on the next tract

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# Analysis of — The 1919 Bible Conference

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Continued from the preceding tract in this series

glected?

Looking back at the Early Church, we find the same pattern of striking physical evidences given at the time that the church was just getting started. (Read the first chapters in the book of Acts.)

It is for this reason that the present writer has openly stated several times that if anyone wishes to arise in our ranks and claim to be an inspired prophet for these last days, we should expect to be able—on many occasions—to see that prophet receiving visions, without breath, for an hour or two. If the physical evidences are lacking, the claim of the so-called prophet are invalid.

But this does not happen. Of the dozen or so prophets which arise each year, none of them show the physical evidences. They are all careful to have their “visions” in private, when no one is around.

## **ARE THE DIETARY COUNSELS WORTHWHILE?**

### ***1919 Bible Conference position:***

W.G. Wirth: “Now as to health reform: Frequently a student will come to me and quote what Sister White says about butter. But we serve butter on our tables right along. And they will bring up about meat, how under no consideration is that to be eaten. And I know that that is unreasonable . . . I would like a little light on some of those details, as to whether we ought to take them at face value.”

A.G. Daniells: “The instructions set forth in the Testimonies was [sic.] never intended to be one great wholesale blanket regulation for peoples’ eating and drinking, and it applies to various individuals according to their physical condition and according to the situation in which they find themselves . . . [He then tells story of a man up in Hammerfest, Norway, who was not eating much, because there was not much to eat, other than meat and starch] When I got back to this country, I talked with Sister White about it, and she said, ‘Why don’t the people use common sense?’”

### ***Our position:***

We ourselves fully believe in dietetic reform. But we must recognize that there are some places in the world—especially near the poles or in the middle of large desert areas—where it might be

difficult to obtain a nourishing diet of fruits, vegetables, and the nut foods. It is also true that there are some Spirit of Prophecy dietetic statements which may apply to some individuals more than to others. In general, it is well for each of us to seek to do the best we can, in our location with our individual physical condition. Admittedly, there are those who are extremists and eat hardly anything of anything, when they are physically able to eat more. But there are also those who disregard the health reform almost entirely, and ere long they suffer for having done so.

There is wisdom in none of us uninspired people setting himself up as the great standard of dietetic reform.

## **WHAT WAS ELLEN WHITE’S RELATION TO BIBLE TRANSLATIONS?**

### ***1919 Bible Conference position:***

W.G. Wirth: “Suppose we do have a conflict between the authorized and revised versions?”

A.G. Daniells: “That question was up before. You must not count me an authority, for I am just like you in the matter. I have to form my own opinions. I do not think Sister White meant at all to establish the certainty of a translation. I do not think she had that in mind, or had anything to do with putting her seal of approval on the authorized version or on the revised version when she quoted that. She used whichever version helps to bring out the thought she has most clearly.”

### ***Our position:***

There were several versions in Ellen White’s day, but she consistently used the Authorized (King James) Version far more than any other one. That is revealing.

But it is also true that Ellen did use other versions. Daniells’ last sentence, quoted above, appears correct. However, I am sure she would not use the modernist versions so widely in use today!

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“Satan is . . . constantly pressing in the spurious—to lead away from the truth. The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God.”—*1 Selected Messages*, 48.

## — PART 2 —

## THE DENCE LETTER

**David Dence is a close friend of the present writer, and it is painful to have to prepare this report. But his letter is now being widely circulated.**

Unfortunately, David made the mistake of working with Charles Wheeling. David's intentions were the best: He wanted to help distribute *Great Controversy* more widely, and he believed that, by working at Wheeling's headquarters in Jemison, Alabama, he could do this more effectively.

The problem is that Wheeling always tries to convert everyone within hearing distance to his speculative positions on Bible prophecy, his ever-changing predictions and time setting, and his view that the Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible writers are inaccurate—in contrast to his own positions.

In a two-page study, "*Shall We Throw Out the Baby?*" David writes from the standpoint of one who has already accepted some of Wheeling's specious arguments which reduce confidence in God's Word. He appeals to the reader not to totally cast aside Scripture, even though it contains error and not all the light. He urges the reader to keep his Spirit of Prophecy books, for they are still useful.

*David:* "Some of my valued friends are forcing my back to the wall, giving me an 'all or nothing' choice regarding the Spirit of Prophecy. 'The Spirit of Prophecy is either all from God or it is all from Satan' they say. 'You cannot pick and choose. Either you accept it all or discard it all.'"

Choosing for himself to continue picking and choosing, selecting that which he considers true in the Spirit of Prophecy and rejecting that which he considers incorrect in it, David lists four sample problems with the Spirit of Prophecy. His point is that she only had part of the light, and much more would come from thinkers and speakers after her time. He says she wrote for those living in the past, not those living today. Frankly, David sees errors where there are not errors.

*David:* "There is no need to question her integrity. She was shown exactly what God wanted His people to believe at that time. If her understanding of prophecy was not complete, it is because God held His hand over those portions of Scripture."

**We will now reply to each of the four "examples" David presents in support of his contention that the Spirit of Prophecy writings kept changing in their doctrinal position, so**

we today should be willing to keep changing ours:

(Example 1) *Dence:* "We find in 1T 206-207 that she initially held no condemnation for those who ate pork."

That *1 Testimonies* statement is a shining example of two facts:

[1] God did not reveal all the light—all at once—to His people through the Spirit of Prophecy. But He did, ultimately, reveal through the Spirit of Prophecy all the light needed by God's people in these last days, in order to give the final warning to the world and prepare for the final crisis and translation. It is for that reason that we are far better off getting our light from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy than seeking to find it in the speculations of contemporary preachers. In her 70 years of ministry, Ellen White gave us an incredible amount of light and truth!

[2] We have the *Testimonies* just as Ellen White wrote them. If the leaders really had changed the *Testimonies*, they surely would have removed that pork statement. Shortly after writing it, the Lord gave her clear light on the dangers of eating swine's flesh (*1 Testimonies*, 524-525, *4 Spiritual Gifts*, 124, 126, *2 Testimonies* 94, 96; *4 Testimonies* 141, etc.).

(Example 2) *Dence:* "Another example is seen in GC 440-441 where she says that the second beast of Revelation 13, the beast that brings fire down from heaven, is the United States. This was an interpretation commonly held by all Protestants at that time. But three years later she upgraded her position to reflect increased light. She was shown that the lamb-like beast is Satan himself rather than the United States (3 SM, 393). 'In Revelation we read concerning Satan, 'And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven.'"

David is trying to prove that Ellen White was ever changing in her doctrinal beliefs, so we should be willing to be ever changing them now. *How sad it is that men and women are ever searching for the elusive "new light" in the uninspired writings and speeches of men, while the radiant shining of wondrous light—both old and new—shines forth from the Inspired Writings of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.*

In regard to David's second point, quoted just above, the two beasts of Revelation 13 (the leopard beast and the lamblike beast) have been clearly identified in the Spirit of Prophecy. There was no

changeover from one position to the other. The first beast is the papacy and the second is the United States. Revelation 13 is based on, and sequentially, follows Revelation 12. In that chapter there is a dragonlike creature, which Revelation 12:9 and the Spirit of Prophecy identify as Satan. In Revelation 13, we see the dragon working through the leopard and lamblike beasts. In order to do that effectively, he gives power to do his will more effectively.

Who then do those two beasts represent? They primarily represent the papacy or United States; yet, behind the scenes, they represent Satan working through both of these earthly powers.

We have, in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, a consistent portrayal, not a change in doctrinal position.

**The leopard beast of Revelation 13 represents the papacy** (*GC 439, 442, 443, 445, 578; SR 381-382*). **The leopard beast of Revelation 13 also represents Satan.** The papacy is a gigantic system false religion and a masterpiece of Satan (*GC 50*). It is a monument of Satan's effort to rule the earth according to his will (*GC 50*). It has not changed (*GC 571*). It conceals the invariable venom of the serpent beneath the variable appearance of the chameleon (*GC 571*), and its work is done under Satan's special direction (*7 BC 911*).

**The lamblike beast of Revelation 13 represents the United States of America** (*GC 440-441, 445, 578-579, SR 381-382*). **The lamblike beast of Revelation 13 also represents Satan.** It speaks with a voice like a dragon (*GC 441-442*). Satan speaks through its apparent wonders (*3 SM 393, quoted above*).

It is clear from the above passages that we do not have a doctrinal changeover here either. Instead, all variations of the concepts are given in *Great Controversy*.

(Example 3) *Dence*: "Yet another example is seen in GC 335 where she says that the sixth trumpet was exactly fulfilled on August 11, 1840. But within a few years both she and Dr. Josiah Litch abandoned that position in favor of the ever increasing light from God's Word. They both concluded that the trumpets were still future. 'Trumpet after trumpet IS TO BE sounded.' See 7 BC 562, 982."

Three points should be noted here:

[1] The 7 BC 562 numerical reference is incorrect; what it should be we do not know. But it probably says about the same as the 7 BC 982 passage, which is quoted.

[2] If the Spirit of Prophecy gave a fulfillment of the sixth trumpet in GC 335, and later said

there would be other fulfillments of all seven trumpets, we cannot assume that she therefore canceled the GC 335 fulfillment as having been an incorrect application. She nowhere said that the GC 335 fulfillment was incorrect; she only said there would be future fulfillments of "trumpet after trumpet."

[3] We cannot be certain from the 7 BC 982 quotation (it is on the bottom right of the page),—that it is even talking about the seven trumpets of Revelation, although that is a definite possibility. It is unwise to use one or two unclear statements to found doctrine upon.

So this third example cannot be used to prove that Ellen White had switched from one doctrinal position to another.

(Example 4) *Dence*: "Perhaps I should cite one final example. In GC 439 she stated that the 42 months spoken of in Revelation 13:5 began in 538 and ended in 1798. Later, after quoting Revelation 13:4-10 she clearly placed this time period in the future: 'This entire chapter is a revelation of what will surely take place.' (See 7 BC 979)."

Two points should be noted here:

[1] Once again we find David using the same flawed argument of over-application: Because, in one passage, the Spirit of Prophecy applied Revelation 13:5 to one time span, and later said the entire chapter still had a future fulfillment,—does not mean that, by so doing, she had abrogated or nullified the first application.

[2] David is trying to prove that the 1260-year prophecy has a future fulfillment. Although that time prophecy is mentioned a remarkable number of times in Daniel and Revelation (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 11:2; 12:6; 12:14; 13:5; more times than any other single time prophecy in the Bible), yet the only Spirit of Prophecy passage David could locate which might place it in the future is this general statement in *7 Bible Commentary 979*. *That is the way it always is with these stretched, futuristic Spirit of Prophecy time-setting statements. They hint at a future time setting, but do not come out and say so!*

On one hand, we have clear (very clear!) Spirit of Prophecy statements that there will be *no correct time-setting calculations after 1844* (except the one the Lord declares at the sounding of the Voice of God after the close of probation, when He declares the day and hour of Jesus' coming)—indeed, so many clear statements that we have a entire 11x17-inch tract filled with part of them (ask for a copy of *"It's No Time for Time Excitement"* [PG—21]).

On the other hand, we have only the most nebulous statements put forward in favor of the possibility that there will, indeed, be such time setting in the future. The above-quoted paragraph is an example of this kind of thing. Read the referred-to passage (7 BC 979; part-way down the second column) in its entirety. It is talking about the mark of the beast being applied and the Sabbath truth being the issue in the final crisis. THAT is what is to be fulfilled in the future! This is the focus of that chapter. *7 Bible Commentary*, 979 does not “clearly place this time period in the future.”

David uses the above four dubious examples to prove his point that Ellen White repeatedly repudiated earlier doctrinal beliefs and adopted new ones.

*David:* “As you can see, her understanding was progressive. In some instances the new light contradicted previously held positions.”

But in the last three of the four examples cited, she did not contradict her earlier positions.

David then appeals to his Wheeling supporters not to throw out the Spirit of Prophecy because she has been “proven wrong.”—But, in reality, Ellen White’s writings have not been proven wrong! It is true that men will attempt to make it appear they are inconsistent, so new theories can be presented,—but the truth is we find those sacred writings to be very consistent.

David goes on to tell the reader that, even though he has tried to show that Ellen White has erred doctrinally, and been fickle and wishy-washy in her theological positions on last-day events, yet we should adhere to her writings anyway,—and why? because not all her writings are about those doctrines!

*David:* “Some conscientious souls say, ‘If Sister White can be proven wrong in one area, she must not be a true prophet. I may as well drink wine and go back to dancing.’”

“While this may seem like logical reasoning to some, it is really an extreme position. Who said anything about the standards? And what do Christian standards have to do with eschatology? There is no reason to question Sister White on health reform, dress reform, education, recreation, association, or true medical missionary work. Even her teaching of the doctrines is sound. Aside from the experience with pork, all the above examples are concentrated in one area: eschatology [last-day events].”

If David believed Ellen White’s presentation of final events, he would have no problem with her statements, but he has been with Wheeling so long, he has imbibed his zeal for developing ever new

theories about coming events and the dates they will occur.

David then goes on to explain that Ellen White’s problem was that she believed that Jesus was going to return soon. If she had not believed that, she would not have made those doctrinal mistakes. Apparently, David imagines that Ellen White thought up her theology by herself, and, because of personal misconceptions, was swayed into developing incorrect theology. He then says that the Bible writers would also have changed their teachings, if they could have seen down to our time. Apparently, their doctrinal teachings were incorrect also.

*David:* “She simply had the same problem all the prophets before her had; she was an Adventist. An Adventist is one who looks for the eminent return of Jesus. For most of her life she confidently expected Jesus’ return in her day. This would understandably color her view of the apocalyptic [end-time] prophecies . . . Just think how quickly Daniel, Peter, Paul, John, and Sister White would commence applying the prophecies if they were alive today! As we have seen above, Sister White progressed in her prophetic understanding. Have we progressed? Or have we gotten stuck just where she left us?”

With that, David ends his position paper. I am very sorry that David takes this stand, for he is about as nice a person as one can meet.

Are you one of those pitiful individuals who chooses to be stuck with the Spirit of Prophecy and Bible, when you could walk in the evanescent sparks of newly thought up speculations? There are those who pity you in your ignorance. But cheer up; you have the Word of God on your side. Be faithful to the end, and He will give you a crown of life.

If you could read the entire 1919 Bible Conference transcript, you would be impressed with the cautious respect shown to President A.G. Daniells by everyone. It was his opinion which was nearly always sought, and his opinion was generally the last word, prior to passing onto another point.

Yet, beneath the surface, there were many who wanted to oust Elder Daniells. (As you may know, he was our longest-running General Conference president, having served since 1901.) The moment came in the San Francisco General Conference Session of 1922. Daniells’ men tried hard to get him re-elected, but W.A. Spicer, without seeking the office, became the new president. Daniells’ retirement proved a blessing to him, for he rediscovered the value of the Spirit of Prophecy, as he researched and wrote the book, *Christ Our Righteousness*. It was written by a true believer in the prophet of these last days.