

# How Ellen White's Books Were Written

by W. C. White

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Addresses To Faculty And Students At The 1935 Advanced Bible School Angwin, California

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## Part I—June 18, 1935

### Introduction

I hold in my left hand one little book containing 219 pages. In this little volume we find a brief sketch of "The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels and Satan and His Angels." This was the first attempt of Ellen G. White to portray this conflict as worked out in the lives of the patriarchs, the life of Christ and His apostles, and the heroes of the Christian Church, as well as its development in the final acts of the conflict. This book was issued in 1858, just seventy-seven years ago.

I hold in my right hand four larger volumes, covering the same subject, and with most of the history greatly enlarged upon. The cover title of this series is "Spirit of Prophecy." The inside title is, "The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels and Satan and His Angels." Volume One was printed in 1870, Volume Two in 1877, Volume Three in 1878, and Volume Four in 1884. There were 1750 pages in these four volumes.

There lies before me on the desk the third and final series containing Mrs. White's last and more full portrayal of the revelations given her regarding this wonderful conflict. The five volumes of the "Conflict of the Ages Series," with *Steps to Christ*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, and *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* comprise nearly 4500 pages.

Many who have read these books and found in them timely instruction and help in their Christian Experience desire to know what we can tell them about the way in which they were written. We shall first describe the mechanical features of the work, and later speak of its spiritual character.

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Volume Two of *Spiritual Gifts* was published in 1860. This was a biographical sketch of her Christian Experience, Views and Labors in Connection With the Rise and Progress of the Third Angel's Message.

After the publication of Volume Two, she wrote twenty-one chapters on Old Testament history from creation to Exodus and the giving of the Law of God at Sinai. This was published in Volume Three. She also wrote sixteen chapters in 120 pages on the experiences of the Israelites from Sinai to David and Solomon. This, with an article on health and a reprint on Testimonies Nos. 1-10, constituted Volume Four of *Spiritual Gifts*. Much of the writing was done in 1865 before making the Eastern trip which occupied the last five months of the year. The two volumes were printed in 1864.

Regarding the story of the writing and publication of the very first Ellen G. White books issued, it is our intention to relate the incidents connected with their production quite fully in our series of articles appearing in the Review. Therefore in what we present to you today we shall begin at about the time where my memory touches the work.

Most of the writing of these four books [*Spiritual Gifts*, Vols. I-IV] was done in Battle Creek in the little cottage on Wood Street, facing the west end of Champion Street. This cottage the White family occupied from 1857 till 1863. At first Mother wrote in the "parlor-bedroom," which was the northwest corner of the ground floor, a room about 10 by 12, with one window to the north. Later when additions were made to the house, she did her writing upstairs in the east chamber, which had two windows to the east.

The larger room with its two windows admitting the morning sunlight was a joy to her, a benefit to her health, and a blessing to her work. Here

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she could be alone, and out of reach of sounds from the dining room and kitchen. She seldom used an ordinary table or desk, but wrote sitting in a low, heavy rocking chair, with a swinging board bolted to the right arm, which served as a writing table.

On coming home from the Review and Herald offices, James White was frequently greeted by his wife with the statement, "James, I want you to hear what I have been writing." Then he would lie down on the sofa in the sitting room, and Mother would read to him what she had written during the forenoon. I can never forget the joy which they shared together as she brought out from time to time precious instruction for the church, and interesting historical articles regarding leading characters in the patriarchal and Christian age.

Sometimes, she would say, "James, here is an article that ought to be printed. It is a testimony on Christian experience, and I want you to listen to it and help me prepare it for the printer." She was an unusually good reader, speaking slowly and distinctly. If her husband discovered weaknesses in the composition, such as faulty tenses of verbs, or disagreement between subject, noun, and verb, he would suggest grammatical corrections. These she would write into her manuscript and then read on.

I remember a year or two later when she was writing on the lines of the early patriarchs, Elder J. N. Andrews was visiting at our home. After dinner was over, Mother would propose to read to him and Father what she had been writing. Both Elder White and Elder Andrews were attentive listeners and one day after two or three chapters had been read to them, Elder Andrews said, "Sister White, have you ever read Milton's *Paradise Lost*?"

“No,” she replied.

“Have you ever read any of his writings?”

Again she replied, “No.”

A few weeks later he brought a copy of *Paradise Lost*, and read to Father and Mother some of Milton’s descriptions of the experiences of Lucifer in his great rebellion. Later on he brought a new copy which he had purchased and gave it to Mother.

She thanked him for it, and looked at it a few minutes without opening it, put it on a high shelf in a cupboard built in back of the stove and under the chimney support. There the book lay many days and several years.

In view of the fact that a careless statement has been made by one of our much loved teachers that Milton’s *Paradise Lost* was a favorite book of Sister White’s, and that she read it often, I think it is worthwhile to make this clear and full statement, and to add to the above, that I never saw Milton’s poem in her hand, and never saw her reading it. I never heard her refer to the book, except on one or two occasions, when she stated to visitors what I have related above, and said that she felt that she ought not to study what anyone else had written regarding the rebellion in heaven until she had written out very fully what had been revealed to her.

She preferred to be alone when she wrote, but in the winter and spring of 1862 and 1863, while she was writing *Spiritual Gifts*, Volume Three, and at the same time caring for me, I was allowed to play quietly in her room. I remember very well its scanty furnishings. Her big writing chair was the most prominent piece of furniture in the room. There was a little old bureau in which she kept her writings, some ordinary straight-back chairs, and a small set of book shelves in which were kept her Bible, Concordance, Bible Dictionary and a few other books.

Mother did most of her writing in the forenoon. Sometimes she wrote before breakfast, and usually she spent most of the afternoon sewing, knitting, or working in her flower garden. Sometimes she went shopping.

Sometimes after Mother had read to her husband an important personal testimony, the question would arise, “What shall we do with it? First of all, it must be sent to the person to whom the testimony is borne, and then because the instruction it contains which will be of service to many others, it must go to them. How shall we get it before them?” Often Mother would say, “I have done my part in writing out what God has revealed to me. You and your associates who are bearing the burden of labor for our people at large, must decide what use shall be made of it.”

In later years she spoke of these counsels with her brethren as follows:

“In the early days of this cause, if some of the leading brethren were present when messages from the Lord were given, we would consult with them as to the best manner of bringing the instruction before the people. Sometimes it was decided that certain portions would better not be read before a congregation. Sometimes those whose course was reprov’d would request that the matters pointing out their wrongs and dangers should be read before others, that they too, might be benefited.”—*Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies*, p. 5.

In the Autumn of 1863, Elder James White sold his home on Wood Street and bought an unfinished house and about an acre and a quarter of land on the northeast corner of Washington and Champion Streets. This house he occupied for many years. It had large rooms with good high ceilings, and Mother, who always felt the need of much fresh air and sunlight, was exceedingly thankful that she could live and work in a room 15 by 15 feet with a 10-foot ceiling.

As the years passed, and the number of believers increased, there was need of more books. The brethren called for the republication of the little books *Spiritual Gifts* that they had learned to love. But Sister White could not consent to this. Since their publication she had received subsequent visions in which the views were repeatedly given, with more details. Some of the additional revelations had been written out and published in articles in the *Review*, and in the *Testimonies for the Church*, Nos. 11-16, also some of the chapters used later in *Spirit of Prophecy*, Volumes One, Two, and Three.

The manner of the writing of the Ellen G. White books will be best understood if we relate somewhat in detail the manner in which the work on *The Great Controversy* and *The Desire of Ages* was accomplished.

## Chapter 1—*The Great Controversy*

When the third volume of the *Spirit of Prophecy* was published in 1878, it was the hope and expectation of James and Ellen White that Volume Four would be printed the following year. But the calls to attend meetings and Elder White's feeble health frustrated this plan.

Not until the autumn of 1882, one year after the death of my father, was the work of arranging the chapters already written, and filling in the gaps, begun in real earnest. It was my privilege to be much at Mother's home in Healdsburg, and witness her earnest endeavor. At first it had been her plan to resume the story of the Acts of the Apostles where Volume Three ceased. But she was instructed in night visions to adopt the plan now seen in the book *The Great Controversy*.

It was revealed to her that she should present an outline of the controversy between Christ and Satan as it developed in the first centuries of

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the Christian era, and in the great Reformation of the sixteenth century, in such a way as to prepare the mind of the reader to understand clearly the controversy as it is going on in our day.

While Mother was writing this book, many of the scenes were presented to her over and over again in visions of the night. The vision of the deliverance of God's people, as given in Chapter 40, was repeated three times; and on two occasions, once at her home in Healdsburg, and once at the St. Helena Sanitarium, members of her family, sleeping in nearby rooms, were awakened from sleep by her clear, musical cry, "They come! They come!" (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 636.)

We can now see that the divine instruction regarding the plan of the book has made it useful to the general public. However, Mother regarded it like all her former writings, as a message chiefly to the church and she used some matter that was especially useful to Seventh-day Adventists.

A detailed consideration of just how the work was carried on from day to day revives in my memory the various steps that were taken:

1. The laying aside of the articles relating to the Acts of the Apostles that she had intended to use.
2. The gathering together of those manuscripts describing the destruction of Jerusalem and the apostasy of the Christian church.
3. These she would read from her manuscripts day-by-day for two or three hours at a time, to me and Sister Davis.
4. The reading was interspersed with discussion regarding strength of description, the length of the chapter, the presence of repetition, and the absence of some features of the story.

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5. To Sister Davis was committed the work of selecting the best presentation, where there were two or three manuscripts on the subject, also the work of eliminating needless repetition,

and the arrangement of paragraphs so as to make the presentation of the subject connected and forceful.

6. Mother took the burden of writing in those essential parts of the history that had not yet been presented. Prayerful meditation would often bring to her mind clearly the views given years before.

Then as she strove to perfect the chapters by filling in the gaps, the Lord gave her in night visions new views, or renewal of former views.

During this time I was many weeks in Healdsburg, living in her home while working part time for the Healdsburg College, and part time for Mother. Therefore, I know how the work was done.

Having spent the early morning and the forenoon in writing, Mother usually relaxed in the afternoon. With her span of little lazy black ponies, she would find recreation in a country drive.

After Sister Davis had arranged the matter for a chapter, she would read it to Sister White, who often then discerned that she had something to add. And, also, when Sister White had written a new section she would usually read it to Sister Davis, and to others of the family if they could take time to listen.

Twice a day the whole family gathered in the sitting room for worship. These were very precious seasons. Sometimes during the first year of this work, when Brother and Sister Ransom Lockwood were her steward and housekeeper; together with Sister J. L. Ings, her faithful copyist; Marian Davis, her secretary; Addie and May Walling, her nieces; and Edith Donaldson, a

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schoolgirl boarder, Mother would relate to us some story of her early experiences, that was much appreciated. Later on, as she became more fully absorbed in her writing, the story telling ceased.

Sister White was not a mere mechanical writer. The deep impressions made upon the reader by portions of her published works are due largely to her own intensity of feeling while she wrote. Occasionally she referred to her emotional depth of feeling, as she penned the solemn messages from heaven to a perishing world. This she wrote in a letter to Elder Smith, February 19, 1884:

“I write from fifteen to twenty pages each day. It is now 11:00 o’clock and I have written fourteen pages of manuscript for Vol. IV. . . .

“As I write upon my book I feel intensely moved. I want to get it out as soon as possible, for our people need it so much. I shall complete it next month if the Lord gives me health as He has done. I have been unable to sleep nights, for thinking of the important things to take place. Three hours and sometimes five is the most of sleep I get. My mind is stirred so deeply I cannot rest. Write, write, write, I feel I must and not delay.

“Great things are before us, and we want to call the people from their indifference to get ready. Things that are eternal crowd upon my vision day and night. The things that are temporal fade from my sight.”—Undated Letter 7, 1884.

She usually wrote upon the subject she was handling very fully. And there was sometimes a difference of opinion between her and the publishers regarding the quantity of matter that should be used. Sister White was best pleased when a subject was presented very fully, and the publishers often brought pressure to bear to have the matter condensed or abbreviated so that the books would not be too large. Consequently there were times when after

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important chapters were prepared and sent to the printer, a new presentation of the subject would be given and she would then write additional matter and insist upon its being incorporated. This experience applied chiefly to *The Great Controversy*, Volume IV.

In the fall of 1884, the book was ready for distribution. The price was made uniform for the entire series, \$1 per volume. In just a short time it was found that the book could be sold to all people, so the publishers took the plates and printed an edition on larger paper. Illustrations were inserted and an experiment made in selling it as a subscription book at \$1.50. During the first four years after its publication ten editions were printed and sold.

In 1885 Mother and I were sent to Europe, and there the question came up regarding the translation of this wonderful book into German, French, Danish and Swedish. As Mother considered this proposition, she decided to make additions to the matter.

Mother's contact with European people had brought to her mind scores of things that had been presented to her in vision during past years, some of them two or three times, and other scenes many times. Her seeing of historic places and her contact with the people refreshed her memory and enabled her to write more graphically regarding many things, and so she desired to add much material to the book. This was done, and the manuscripts were prepared for translation.

Much of the research for historical statements used in the new European and American editions of *The Great Controversy* was done in Basel, where we had access to Elder Andrews' large library, and where the translators had access to the university libraries.

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Twenty-five years later in 1911, when we came to go over this matter for the purpose of inserting references to historical quotations, there were some quotations which we could not locate. In some cases we found statements making the same point from other historians. These were in books accessible in many public libraries. When we brought this to Mother's attention, she said, "Use the one you can give reference to, so that the reader of the book, if he wishes to go to the source and find it, can do so."

Her interest in what she saw in Europe, and its relation to her writings, especially regarding the Reformation, is expressed in a diary entry written from Basel on May 15, 1887:

"We have just returned from visiting Zurich. It is a much prettier city than Basel. The old part of the city contains many historical places of interest. We visited a Cathedral. . . . This building was put up by Charlemagne. We gathered many items of interest which we will use. Zwingle preached in this church in 1518. . . .

"We visited an old building which had been a church where Zwingle had preached. Here was a life-size statue of Zwingle clad as he was chaplain of the army when he was killed. He had his Bible in his hand, and his hand leaning on his sword. He has on the dress or coat reaching to his feet, which was worn by the clergy in those days. This monument is above his tomb. We entered the building and there we found it was used for a library of ancient books in Latin and in Greek and dead languages. We saw here the veritable Bible Zwingle used and letters written by his own hand.

"We had just been writing upon the reformers—Wycliffe, Jerome, John Huss, Zwingle, and other reformers, so I was much interested in all that I saw."—Ms 29, 1887.

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In her public ministry, Mother had always shown an ability to select from the storehouse of truth, matter well adapted to the needs of the congregation before her; and she always thought that, in the choice of matter for publication in her books, sound judgment should be shown in selecting that which is best suited to the needs of those who will read the book.

Therefore, when the new edition of *The Great Controversy* was brought out in 1888, intended for world-wide circulation, there were left out about twenty pages of matter—four or five pages in one place—which was very instructive to the Adventists of America, but which was not appropriate for readers in other parts of the world. Examples of this may be found in the chapter entitled, "The Snares of Satan," pages 518-530, in the 1911 edition.

## Chapter 2—Use of Historical Writings

In her writings regarding the events of ancient and modern history, and especially the history of the great reformation of the sixteenth century, she made many quotations from historians. These were usually enclosed in quotation marks, but without giving specific credit to the historians from which they were taken. Where the historian stated what she desired to present, but in language too extended for her use, she would paraphrase the statement, using some of the words of the book and some of her own words. In this way she was able to present forceful and comprehensive statements in a brief way. Regarding this use of matter which she copied from reliable authors, she said:

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“The great events which have marked the progress of reform in past ages, are matters of history, well known and universally acknowledged by the Protestant world; they are facts which none can gainsay. This history I have presented briefly, in accordance with the scope of the book, and the brevity which must necessarily be observed, the facts have been condensed into as little space as seemed consistent with a proper understanding of their application. In some cases where a historian has so grouped together events as to afford, in brief, a comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted; but except in a few instances no specific credit has been given, since they are not quoted for the purpose of citing that writer as authority, but because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject. In narrating the experience and views of those carrying forward the work of reform in our own time, similar use has occasionally been made of their published works.”—Introduction to *The Great Controversy*, pp. 11, 12 (printed in 1888).

Mrs. White never claimed to be an authority on the details of history. She never wrote to correct historians. She never wrote history merely for the entertainment of her readers. She regarded a knowledge of history as helpful to a proper understanding of the great conflict going on in heaven and earth over the eternal destinies of men. She regarded the records of the conflicts and victories of men in past ages, as intended for our instruction upon whom the ends of the world have come.

She recognized that there were differences of opinion among historians regarding some historical events, and was not surprised or perturbed when she was told that in some detailed description she had used statements from the pen of some writers which were disputed by other historians.

The question may be asked, “Can the descriptions of scenes and events copied from other writers, find a proper place in the inspired writings of a messenger of God?”

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We find that writers of the Bible not only copied from historical chronicles, but they sometimes used the exact language of other Bible writers, without giving credit. And, likewise, if in the writings of one today, who gives abundant evidence of being a chosen messenger of God, we find phrases or statements from other writers, why should this be an occasion for question more than the same circumstances when found in the Scriptures?

When in the early days inquiries came to Mrs. White regarding the passages in her books that she had copied from historians, they were presented as questions regarding the authenticity of the statements. Then the inquiry was, “Are these passages that have been shown you in vision, or are they what you have learned by the reading of histories?”

She dismissed these questions with few words, stating that what she had presented in her books was a delineation of that which had been presented to her in vision, and that her occasional copying from historians was a matter of convenience rather than a matter of necessity.

In later years, when Mrs. White became aware that some of the readers of her books were perplexed over the question as to whether her copying from other writers was an infringement on somebody's rights, the inquiry was raised, "Who has been injured?" No injustice or injury was, or could be named. Nevertheless, she gave instruction that, lest anyone should be offended or led to stumble over the fact that passages from historians had been used without credit, in future editions of her book, *The Great Controversy*, a faithful effort should be made to search out those passages that had been copied from historians, which had not been enclosed in quotation marks, and that quotation marks should be inserted wherever they should be used. This instruction was conscientiously followed.

### Chapter 3—*The Writing of The Desire of Ages*

All through the years it was Sister White's desire to deal very fully in her writings with the mission of Christ, His ministry, His teachings, and His sacrifice for us. She wrote much on this phase of the conflict in the '70's, which was published in Volumes Two and Three of the *Spirit of Prophecy*, but this did not satisfy her. So when work on *Patriarchs and Prophets* was finished and had gone to the publisher, she turned her thoughts to the preparation of a more comprehensive treatise on the life of Christ. For this work she carried a great burden, and we find many references in her letters to her hopes of soon being able to get the book under way.

It was her hope when she went to Australia that much time could be devoted to this work. During the years 1892 to 1898 she was led to spend considerable time in the preparation of chapters for this book.

In the preparation of this book on the life of Christ, as in the preparation of other later publications, she did not sit down and write the book straight through, chapter by chapter, in the order in which we find them today. She had those who were employed as her helpers, gather together what she had written in former years on the subject. This material was found in her published books, in articles that had appeared in periodicals, and in her letters and manuscripts.

With this material in hand, she wrote many additional articles, as the experiences of Christ were opened anew to her. Then when these passages, with what she had written in former years were grouped in their natural order, she worked with energy to write in the connecting history.

Altogether her writings on the life and teachings of our Saviour were found to be so voluminous that they could not all be contained in one

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volume. So *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, and a portion of *Ministry of Healing*, were made up of the overflow material, which could not be included in the already voluminous book on the life of Christ.

We get a glimpse of the intensity under which Sister White wrote while preparing copy for this wonderful book, in a letter written in 1892 which she addressed to Elder Olsen, president of the General Conference:

"I walk with trembling before God. I know not how to speak or trace with pen the large subject of the atoning sacrifice. I know not how to present subjects in the living power in which they stand before me. I tremble for fear lest I shall belittle the great plan of salvation by cheap words. I bow my soul in awe and reverence before God and say, 'Who is sufficient for these things?'"—Letter 40, 1892.

Many letters written by Sister White during these years express her disappointment at being so pressed with other duties that she could make but slow progress with the work on the book. In 1894 she wrote:

“Now after I have been in this country nearly three years, there is still much to be done before the book will be ready for publication. Many branches of work have demanded my attention. I am pressed beyond measure with the work of writing out testimonies, caring for the poor, and traveling with my own conveyance, 8, 11, and 13 miles to meet with the churches.”

Pressed with these burdens and cares, she did much of her writing when others were asleep. “My time for writing usually commences at three o’clock in the morning,” she says, “when all in the house are asleep. Often I am awakened at half past twelve, one or two o’clock.”—Letter 114, 1896.

One such morning, before resuming her writing on the book, she penned the following in her diary:

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“I awaken at half past two, and offer up my prayer to God in the name of Jesus. I am weak in physical strength; my head is not free from pain; my left eye troubles me. In writing upon the life of Christ, I am deeply wrought upon. I forget to breathe as I should. I cannot endure the intensity of feeling that comes over me as I think of what Christ suffered in our world. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed, if we receive Him by faith as our personal Saviour.”—Ms 70, 1897.

## **Part II—July 27, 1935**

### **Chapter 4—*The Work of Mrs. White’s Literary Assistants***

The statement that in the preparation of her writings for publication, Mrs. White had the help of one or more efficient workers who assisted in gathering the material and in helping to prepare it, does not mean that the books or articles were in any part the product of their pens. They were not.

The matters revealed to Mrs. White while in vision were not usually a word-for-word narration of events with their lessons. They were generally in the nature of flashlight or great panoramic views of various scenes in the experience of men, sometimes in the past, sometimes in the future, together with the spoken instruction connected with these experiences. At times, the actions and conversations of men in groups, of churches, of conferences, and of multitudes were revealed to her, with a clear perception of their purposes, aims, and motives. Often verbal instruction was given regarding what was thus revealed.

When the time came to write out these revelations, Mrs. White would endeavor to trace in human language that which had been opened before her in these heavenly views. No supernatural force mechanically took control of her hand, and guided in the words which she wrote, and very rarely were the exact words which she should use dictated by the heavenly messenger by her side. Mrs. White speaks of her own choice of language in writing out her views as follows:

“Although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation.”—*Review and Herald*, October 8, 1867.

It was ever a source of regret to Mrs. White that her school education had been very brief, and her knowledge of the technical rules of writing therefore limited. I clearly remember in the earlier years of her work in Battle Creek, when James White on coming home from the Review and Herald office, would be asked to listen to what Mother had written and to help her in preparing it for publication. Then, as she read to him what she had written, he would comment on the matter, rejoicing in the power of the message, and would point out weaknesses in composition and faulty grammar.

Regarding such experiences, she made a statement in 1906 as follows:

“While my husband lived, he acted as a helper and counselor in the sending out of the messages that were given to me. We traveled extensively. Sometimes light would be given to me in the night season, sometimes in the daytime before large congregations. The instruction I received in vision was faithfully written out by me, as I had time and strength for the work. Afterward we examined the matter together, my husband correcting grammatical errors, and eliminating needless repetition. Then it was carefully copied for the persons addressed, or for the printer.”—*The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies to the Church*, p. 4.

As time went on the making of copies of numerous individual testimonies made it necessary to employ a copyist, and as Elder White could not give time to the correction of all her writings, the burden of making grammatical corrections was often laid upon the copyist. Many individuals were employed in the years that followed, as literary assistants who copied the testimonies, and prepared articles for the periodicals, and chapters for her books. Conscientious Christians only were chosen as literary assistants, and in their work they adhered strictly to the instruction which was given them regarding their part of the work.

It was well understood by the secretaries that only Mrs. White’s thoughts were to be used, and also her own words as far as grammatically consistent in expressing those thoughts. In no case was the copyist or

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editor allowed to introduce thoughts not found in Mrs. White’s manuscripts. In cases where paragraphs and sentences lost some of their power because of faulty arrangement, the secretaries were expected to make transpositions. They were also instructed to leave out that which was plainly unnecessary repetition. To these rearrangements and omissions, Mrs. White gave careful attention.

Regarding the handwritten manuscripts that came from her pen, her literary secretaries say that there was a marked difference in the matter of literary perfection. Usually the original manuscripts written when she was not burdened with travel and preaching or full of anxieties connected with the conditions of the church, were found to be beautiful, forceful and elegant in expression and with very few grammatical imperfections. But in some original manuscripts written when she was perplexed by many cares and burdens and especially when working very hurriedly, under the feeling that the manuscript must be completed quickly, there was much repetition and faulty grammatical construction. At such times she paid little attention to the rules of punctuation, capitalization and spelling. She expected that these matters would be corrected by the copyist.

At times some of the early testimonies were put into print without first receiving the careful work referred to in the above paragraph. This made necessary some changes in the wording when they were republished in 1863.

## **Chapter 5—Mrs. White’s Copyists and Secretaries**

At the very first of her writing out testimonies to individuals, she made two copies, one to be kept as a record of what she had written, and one to be sent to the person for whom the message was given. As this work became heavy, she sometimes sent the testimony to the person addressed, asking

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that the recipient make a copy for himself and return to her the original. Unwilling to have it made known what Sister White had been shown, some refused to make a copy or to return to her what she had written. Thus some testimonies were lost. And when, as sometimes happened, misrepresentations were made regarding what was in the testimony, she had no written proof as to what the testimony actually said.

In 1860 she received some help in copying from her housekeeper, Lucinda Abbey. In 1861, she employed Adelia Patten to be copyist and to teach her three boys in a home school.

In 1863 Adeline Howe, her cook, found time to do much copying. In 1867 and 1868, Julia Burgess did considerable copying. In 1869 and 1870, after moving back to Battle Creek from Greenville, when copy of *Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 1, was being prepared, Miss Emma Sturges, and Miss Annie Hale were employed as copyists.

In the autumn of 1872, Mother visited Colorado, and became acquainted with her niece, Mary Clough, and in 1874 and 1875, Miss Clough assisted in preparing copy for *Spirit of Prophecy*, Volumes Two and Three. She also accompanied Elder and Mrs. White in their camp meeting labors and acted as reporter for the public press. In so doing, she was the first publicity agent regularly employed by the denomination, and may be looked up to as the grandmother of our Press Bureau.

Her college education, her experience as a newspaper reporter, the confidence that she thus gained, and the praise that was heaped upon her work, unfitted her for the delicate and sacred work of being copy-editor for *Review* articles, and the chapters for *The Great Controversy*, *Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. Four. In a vision of the night it was presented to Mother that she and Mary were looking at some wondrous development in the sky.

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What they saw meant much to Sister White, but to Mary it seemed to mean nothing. The angel said, "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned." He then instructed Sister White that she should no longer employ her niece as her book editor. Similar instruction was given her years later in regard to Fannie Bolton.

After the death of Elder James White in 1881, Sister White employed Sister Marian Davis. She had been for some years a proof-reader in the *Review* and *Herald* office, and Sister White received assurance through revelation that Sister Davis would be a conscientious, faithful and trustworthy helper.

Later on, Sister Eliza Burnham was employed by Mother, and at one time Mrs. B. L. Whitney and Miss Fannie Bolton were employed at Battle Creek as helpers when there was much work to do. Sister Davis was with Sister White in Europe in 1886 and 1887, and was also her principal helper in Australia, also from 1900 to 1904 at "Elmshaven," St. Helena. The last work done by Sister Davis was the selection and arrangement of the matter used in *Ministry of Healing*.

Miss Sarah Peck was an efficient helper in Australia, and St. Helena. She bore the chief burden of arranging the matter in *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 6.

Clarence C. Crisler was a valuable helper, as a reporter of sermons and interviews, and the copyist of many letters. He also assisted in the preparation of periodical articles, and in the arrangement of the matter comprising *Acts of the Apostles* and *Prophets and Kings*.

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Several times instruction was given in vision to Sister White regarding those who should be her helpers in the household and in the preparation of her writings for publication. Especially were Sisters Lucinda Abbey Hall and Marian Davis specified as helpers that she needed, and persons in whom she could implicitly trust.

This sketch of the workers does not claim to be complete. It was never considered by me or by any of Mother's helpers that the personnel of her working force was of any primary interest to the readers of her books.

### **Chapter 6—Editorial Work on *The Desire of Ages***

We are not left in uncertainty regarding the manner in which the book *The Desire of Ages* was prepared, for in the memory of those conversant with the work, and in letters from Mrs. White and Miss Davis written during the period of its preparation, we find definite information regarding the work. In Mrs. White's letters we find frequent mention of the fact that she was writing specifically for the book on the life of Christ, and very definite statements regarding the part that Miss Davis acted. Thus, in a letter written to Dr. J. H. Kellogg, October 25, 1895, she says:

“Marian is working at the greatest disadvantage. I find but little time in which to write on the life of Christ. I am continually receiving letters that demand an answer, and I dare not neglect important matters that are brought to my notice. Then there are churches to visit, private testimonies to write, and many other things to be attended to that tax me and consume my time. Marian greedily grasps every letter I write to others in order to find sentences that she can use in the Life of Christ. She has been collecting everything that has a bearing on Christ's lessons to His disciples, from all possible sources. . . . I have about decided to . . . devote all my time to writing for the books that ought to be prepared without further delay. I would like to write on the Life of Christ, on Christian Temperance, and prepare Testimony Number 34, for it is very much needed. . . .

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“You know that my whole theme both in the pulpit and in private, by voice and pen, is the Life of Christ.”—Letter 41, 1895.

### **Chapter 7—Its Beauty of Style**

Some have marveled at the extraordinary beauty of the language in *The Desire of Ages*. The last sentence of the foregoing letter, in suggesting that this was one of her favorite themes, furnishes an explanation for the beautiful phraseology of the book. The abundance of material, and the depths of feeling with which she wrote on this subject, made possible the selection and grouping of the most beautiful passages to be found in scores of manuscripts and letters.

### **Chapter 8—The Ministry of Suffering**

It is well known that some of the world's masterpieces of literature, of poetry, and of gospel hymns have been forged on the anvil of pain. It was thus with much of her writings on the life and ministry of Jesus. Soon after Mrs. White reached Australia, she began to suffer with rheumatism and for eleven months was in constant pain. Of this experience she wrote:

“I have been passing through great trial in pain and suffering and helplessness, but through it all I have obtained a precious experience more valuable to me than gold.”—Letter 7, 1892.

After speaking of her feeling of great disappointment because she was unable to visit among the churches, she said further:

“This unreconciliation was at the beginning of my sufferings and helplessness, but it was not long until I felt that my affliction was a part of God’s plan. I found that by partly lying and partly sitting I could place myself in position to use my crippled hands, and although suffering much pain I could do considerable writing. Since coming to this country I have written sixteen hundred pages. . . .

“Many nights during the past nine months I was enabled to sleep but two hours a night, and then at times darkness would gather about me; but I prayed and realized much sweet comfort in drawing nigh to God. . . . I was all light in the Lord.

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Jesus was sacredly near, and I found the grace given sufficient.” *Ibid.*

A few months later she said:

“I have tested, and I know whereof I speak. For eleven months I could not sleep nights. I prayed to be relieved. Relief did not come but I had light in the Lord by night, and by day. I know wherein my strength lies. I thought of Christ a great deal in this time.”—Ms 17, 1893.

Thus by affliction, Mrs. White was confined for nearly a year to her room. Here she was free from the multitude of problems that came to her when she was traveling and in public work. Here she had opportunity to think intensely regarding the views that the Lord had given her. She was enabled to write more freely than at other times. Some of the choicest passages in *The Desire of Ages* came from her pen when she was confined not only to her room, but much of the time to her bed. The secret of her power to produce this beautiful language is found in three passages just quoted: “Jesus was sacredly near,” “I thought of Christ a great deal,” and “I have written sixteen hundred pages.”

Speaking of the work of her helpers, Mrs. White in 1900 made the following interesting statement about the part taken in her work by Miss Marian Davis, who assisted her for more than twenty years:

“The books are not Marian’s productions, but my own, gathered from all my writings. Marian has a large field from which to draw, and her ability to arrange the matter is of great value to me. It saves my poring over a mass of matter, which I have no time to do.”—Letter 61a, 1900.

Another of her secretaries, at a later time, wrote as follows:

“The editors in no wise change Sister White’s expression if it is grammatically correct, and is an evident expression of the evident thought. Sister White as human instrumentality has a pronounced style of her own, which is preserved all through

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her books and articles that stamps the matter with her individuality. Many times her manuscript does not need any editing, often but slight editing, and again a great deal of literary work; but article or chapter, whatever has been done upon it, is passed back into her hands by the editor.”—Fannie Bolton in a “Confession Concerning the Testimony of Jesus Christ,” addressed to “Dear Brethren in the Truth,” written about the time of the General Conference of 1901.

In some minds the question lingers if the writings in passing through the hands of the literary assistants may not have been altered somewhat in thought, or received additions to the thoughts of the

author. This question is clearly answered by the written statements from several of Mrs. White's helpers, found in our files.

D. E. Robinson, for many years a literary assistant, in 1933 said:

“In all good conscience I can testify that never was I presumptuous enough to venture to add any ideas of my own or to do other than follow with most scrupulous care the thoughts of the author.”

W. C. White testified in 1900 that:

“None of Mother's workers are authorized to add to the manuscripts by introducing thoughts of their own.”

Miss Marian Davis in the same year wrote:

“From my own knowledge of the work, as well as from the statements of Sister White herself, I have the strongest possible ground for disbelieving that such a thing [the adding of thoughts by the copyist] was done.”

Miss Fannie Bolton, in 1894, testified:

“I can say that just as far as it is consistent with grammar and rhetoric, her expressions are left intact.”

These clear assertions are in harmony with Mrs. White's statement penned in 1906. After speaking of the help given her by her husband and others, already quoted in this document, she said:

“As the work grew, others assisted me in the preparation of matter for publication. After my husband's death, faithful

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helpers joined me, who labored untiringly in the work of copying the testimonies, and preparing articles for publication. But the reports that are circulated, that any of my helpers are permitted to add matter or change the meaning of the messages I write out, are not true.”—*The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies to the Church*, p. 4.

## **Chapter 9—*The Statement in Brief***

To the question, “How were the later books prepared?” we might briefly reply: Mrs. White wrote voluminously on many topics. To supplement what was written specifically for some definite book, the literary assistant gathered from her writings—published articles, manuscripts, letters, and reports of discourses—other related gems of thought. Working together, Mrs. White and her assistants planned the outline of the books and prepared the matter chapter by chapter. Then in its final form, the manuscripts were read and given final approval by Mrs. White and then sent to the printer.

## **Chapter 10—*Ministry of Healing***

The book, *Ministry of Healing*, although not issued until the year 1905, has become one of the most highly prized of the Ellen G. White publications. While this popular work is perhaps the most well-known E. G. White book treating on health, yet it was not her first effort in presenting this most important subject for the public.

A few months after the memorable Health Reform Vision was given, June 6, 1863, an article entitled “Health” appeared in *Spiritual Gifts*, Volume IV, (published in 1864) which constitutes the first record of the instruction given at that time on the subject of disease and its causes as well as its treatment and cure by rational methods.

With the light and knowledge which was thus bestowed, the leaders in the developing work of the Sabbath and Advent Movement were faced with the duty of carrying on an extensive program in health reform education. To aid in this effort, "How to Live," in six parts of about 64 pages each, was published in 1865 and 1866. In each of these six parts, Mrs. White had an article entitled, "Disease and Its Causes." In these six articles, comprising 72 pages in all, she presented more fully, the great truths revealed to her regarding health and the duty of engaging in a Health Reform movement. The third of these articles, under the title of "Drugs and Their Effects," was reprinted in the *Review and Herald*, in the issues from August 15 to September 12, 1899.

In later years Mother wrote still more fully the views given her in 1863, and in subsequent visions. Some of this was published in the *Health Reformer*.

From the year 1864 to 1914, a period of 50 years, she carried on her heart a burden of presenting to the Adventist people, and through them to the world, the great light that God had revealed to her regarding health, temperance, self-denial and holiness. In addition to the many articles upon these subjects in the *Review and Herald*, the *Health Reformer*, and the *Youth's Instructor*, in 1890 she brought out the book, *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, the first half of which is made up of selections of articles from her pen, and the last half a compilation of articles written by James White.

She was never satisfied with this brief collection of articles, yet it was not until fifteen years later, in 1905, that she presented to the world

the wonderful book, *Ministry of Healing*. With this brief background, let us now speak of the preparation of the material for this volume.

For years, Mrs. White and her helpers had been cutting out of the *Review*, *Health Reformer*, and other periodicals, her articles and parts of articles on Christian Temperance and saving them for future use. When the time came that she had a sufficient corps of helpers so that articles for the *Review*, *Signs of the Times*, *Youth's Instructor*, *Bible Echo* and our health papers, could be supplied without absorbing the time and energy of Miss Davis, Mother directed that she should give first attention to the searching out and bringing together of articles to compose a book on health and temperance. Then it was found that there were many hundreds of pages of manuscripts from which she could draw valuable material.

The Lord had given Sister Marian Davis a wonderful memory, and this was of great service in her work of searching for and grouping together the choicest things that Mother had written regarding Christ in His ministry as a Healer; also as an Example to medical evangelists and medical missionaries; regarding disease and its true cause; and regarding health and how to maintain it.

The work was entered upon with excellent courage and with great determination that of the wonderful things which Sister White had written, there should be gathered together that which was most forceful, most enlightening, and most encouraging.

Mother eagerly undertook the work of planning the book. As Christ was the central theme of all her discourses and writings, His ministry as the great medical missionary must form the basis of this long-contemplated publication.

That every class of invalids might find hope in Christ's present-day ministry, it was planned that the first chapters should show forth Christ as the source of Life, Christ as the Great Healer, Christ as the very present Minister to the sick and the suffering. It must be shown that there is no sickness outside of the range of His love and His power.

While the principal aim of the book was to lead the reader to physical and spiritual life and health, it must also include counsel especially for the nurse and the physician, pointing out the privilege of their fellowship with the Life-Giver and an encouragement to follow His methods in their ministry. Helpful counsel for medical evangelists must also be included.

Time and again while the book was in preparation, Mother and those associated with her in selecting and arranging the manuscript would gather in her room and discuss the objects and best plans for the book:

1. Whom the book would serve.
2. How much room should be given to each subject.
3. What was the best relationship of the great subjects with which it would deal.

When there had been gathered considerable matter thought to be suitable for certain chapters, the manuscripts would be grouped and read to Mother or placed in her hands to read. Oftentimes this revived her memory of wonderful scenes presented to her, and she entered enthusiastically into the work of rewriting many passages, giving them a fresh touch and greater vigor. At times she would find it necessary to adapt an article written with Seventh-day Adventists in mind, so that the presentations would be appropriate for those readers also who were not Seventh-day Adventists.

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While the work of preparing *Ministry of Healing* was in full swing, Mother was called to Washington and Sister Davis was requested to go on selecting material to be considered by Sister White later. Mother's absence greatly delayed the work.

The trip east in 1904 occupied more time than was expected, but immediately on her return to her "Elmshaven" home early in the fall, the work was resumed by her and the manuscript was quickly brought to completion. In writing to Mrs. Josephine Gotzian on April 11, 1905, she spoke of the work on this forthcoming book as follows:

Through my absence last summer, we lost much time on our book work, and for some time I have been very busy preparing matter for, and reading proofs of *Ministry of Healing*.—Letter 113, 1905.

In another letter written the same day, she declared, "I have just finished reading over the proofs of *Ministry of Healing*"—Letter 109, 1905

Early in the plans for this book, Mother was led to dedicate it to a very definite field of usefulness. Speaking of this in a letter to Mr. H. W. Kellogg on September 20, 1903, she says:

"My next book is to be on temperance and the medical missionary work. It is my purpose to give the manuscript of this book to our Sanitariums, to help them to raise the debts resting on them, as I gave *Christ's Object Lessons* to raise the debts on our schools. I think that this is the best I can do, and that this will be a most appropriate book for this purpose. I am preparing other books as fast as possible, which I wish to bring before the people."—Letter 209, 1903.

It was found that the book was admirably planned to lend itself most readily to the use of the salesman. It was pushed energetically in the institutional relief campaigns, and this gift instituted by Mother, and supplemented by the untiring labors of those who joined in making the relief

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campaign a success brought great financial benefit to our medical institutions in America and Europe which were loaded down heavily with debt.

Speaking of the authorship of *Ministry of Healing*, two years after its appearance, Mother said in a letter to Elder Burden, "The Lord gave me His Holy Spirit to enable me to write the manuscript for this book" (Letter 276, 1907). In urging our people to join heartily in the sale of this volume as a means of

institutional relief, in an article appearing in the *Review* of August 13, 1906, she spoke of the content of the book and her joy in its special use, as follows:

“This book contains the wisdom of the Great Physician. To me it has been a great privilege to donate my work on these books [*Ministry of Healing* and *Christ’s Object Lessons*] to the cause of God.”

### Chapter 11—*The Conflict Story Completed*

Although the outstanding features of the great conflict were covered in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Desire of Ages*, and *The Great Controversy*, there still remained two wide gaps in the span of history from the fall to the final restoration, one period reaching from the death of David to the birth of Christ, the other covering the first century of the Christian church. When other work permitted, Mrs. White and her literary assistants undertook with enthusiasm the task of gathering and preparing matter for two more volumes to complete the series. As in the case of *Desire of Ages*, there were to be found in earlier books and in periodical articles, hundreds of pages already in print covering portions of the history of these periods. Also many chapters and portions of chapters could be drawn from the manuscript

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and letter file. Then much new matter was written by Mrs. White for the work in preparation.

Limited space permits only one brief statement from Mrs. White relative to the work on these volumes. A letter written October 15, 1911, gives a picture of the work then in progress:

“My work on the book, *The Acts of the Apostles*, is completed. In a few weeks you shall have a copy. I have had excellent help in preparing this work for the press. There are other writings that I desire to get before our people, that they may speak when my voice is silent. The book on Old Testament History [*Prophets and Kings*] which we hope to bring out next, will call for earnest effort. I am grateful for the help the Lord is giving me in the labors of faithful, trained workers, and that these workers are ready to carry forward this work as fast as it is possible.”—Letter 88, 1911.

A few months after the above statement was penned, *Acts of the Apostles* came from the press and was given a hearty welcome. Soon the work on *Prophets and Kings* was undertaken in earnest, but due to the pressure of other important tasks, was carried forward slowly.

As Mrs. White advanced in years, naturally she wrote less and depended more upon the gathering of matter from the wealth of material already written. This is especially true of *Prophets and Kings* which was prepared during the last three years of her life. She, however, took an active interest in this work and went over the manuscript chapter by chapter as it was compiled from her published articles and manuscripts. When chapters could not be completely rounded out from the already available matter, she gave the help needed in perfecting and completing the work. In substantiation of these points we will refer to correspondence between the principal

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compiler of the book, Elder C. C. Crisler, and myself, who was at the time away from home. Brother Crisler’s letters not only give information as to the work on the book, but also little glimpses into the experiences of Mrs. White during her last active labors. On January 12, 1915, Brother Crisler wrote to me:

“There is but little of importance to tell you, other than that your mother is keeping about as usual. She seems to be just about the same from day to day. I find her able to consider manuscripts daily. . . .

She takes pleasure in this work, and gives real help when we need her help. She also spends some time in going over her standard books, and in reading large-type books close by her chair.”

On January 22, 1915, he wrote:

“This Friday noon finds us about as usual in all departments. Your mother is keeping her usual strength—able to get about with a fair degree of comfort; good appetite most of the time; enjoyment of home life; ability to spend some hours in reading, and to give consideration to such manuscripts as are in preparation. For these mercies we continually thank God.”

As the work was nearing completion an accident overtook the author. Then, as Mrs. White was unable to continue her careful study and approval of new work on the manuscript, the work stopped. This break in the work, so nearly finished, gave concern to those working on the manuscript and the prospective publishers of the forthcoming book. A few weeks after the accident, Brother Crisler wrote to the manager of the Pacific Press regarding the status of the manuscript as follows:

“With the exception of the last two chapters, copy for which we have abundant material on the file, the manuscript on “The Captivity and Restoration of Israel,” was fully completed prior to Sister White’s accident. It is therefore possible to hope for a finished volume, notwithstanding her present inability to do any literary work. This may be brought about by the publishers stating in their preface that the last two chapters were prepared from her writings, but were not finally gone over by her in person. . . . In view of the author’s inability to consider revisions, it is probable that any further work on the

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manuscript must, of necessity, be in the nature of abridgments rather than alterations.”

The situation is summed up briefly in *Life Sketches* from which we will quote a few words:

“At the time of her accident, in February, 1915, all but the last two chapters had been completed . . . and these final chapters had been sufficiently blocked out to admit of completion by the inclusion of additional matter from her manuscript file.”—Page 436.

## **Chapter 12—God-Given Information**

During her last years, as alluded to by Brother Crisler, Mrs. White frequently took pleasure in re-reading the books she had written containing the conflict story. In viewing her experience in bringing out these books, she places the origin of the information and instruction far beyond her own mind. In 1902, speaking of the source of light presented therein, she said:

“Sister White is not the originator of these books. They contain the instruction that during her life-work God has been giving her. They contain the precious, comforting light that God has graciously given His servant to be given to the world. From their pages this light is to shine into the hearts of men and women, leading them to the Saviour.”—*Colporteur Evangelist*, p. 36.

## **Chapter 13—How Does She Know?**

The question is asked, "How does Sister White know in regard to the matters of which she speaks so decidedly, as if she had authority to say these things?" I speak thus because they flash upon my mind when in perplexity like lightning out of a dark cloud in the fury of a storm. Some scenes presented before me years ago have not been retained in my memory, but when the instruction then given is needed, sometimes even when I am standing before the people, the remembrance comes sharp and clear, like a flash of lightning, bringing to mind distinctly that particular instruction. At such times I cannot refrain from saying the things that flash into my mind, not because I have had a new vision, but because that which was presented to me, perhaps years in the past, has been recalled to my mind forcibly.—Ms 33, 1911.

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In 1890, she wrote as follows regarding the basis of her confidence, and regarding the attacks that would be made upon her work:

"I testify the things which I have seen, the things which I have heard, the things which my hands have handled, of the Word of Life. And this testimony I know to be of the Father and the Son. We have seen and do testify that the power of the Holy Ghost has accompanied the presentation of the truth, warning with pen and voice, and giving the messages in their order. To deny this work would be to deny the Holy Ghost, and would place us in that company who have departed from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits.

"The enemy will set everything in operation to uproot the confidence of the believers in the pillars of our faith in the messages of the past, which have placed us upon the elevated platform of eternal truth, and which have established and given character to the work. The Lord God of Israel has led out His people, unfolding to them truth of heavenly origin. His voice has been heard, and is still heard, saying, 'Go forward from strength to strength, from grace to grace, from glory to glory. The work is strengthening and broadening, for the Lord God of Israel is the defense of His people.'"—*Life Sketches*, p. 430.

"Early in my public labors I was bidden by the Lord, 'Write, write, the things that are revealed to you.' At the time this message came to me, I could not hold my hand steady. My physical condition made it impossible for me to write. But again came the word, 'Write the things that are revealed to you.' I obeyed; and as the result it was not long before I could write page after page with comparative ease. Who told me what to write? Who steadied my right hand, and made it possible for me to use a pen? It was the Lord. . . .

"The light that I have received, I have written out, and much of it is now shining forth from the printed page. There is, throughout my printed works, a harmony with my present teaching. Some of the instruction found in these pages was given under circumstances so remarkable as to evidence the wonder-working power of God in behalf of His truth. Sometimes while I was in vision, my friends would approach me, and exclaim, 'Why, she does not breathe!' Placing a mirror before my lips, they found that no moisture gathered on the glass. It was while there was no sign of any breathing, that I kept talking of the things that were being presented before me.

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"These messages were thus given to substantiate the faith of all, that in these last days we might have confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy. I thank God that He has preserved my voice, which in my early youth physicians and friends declared would be silent within three months.

"The God of heaven saw that I needed to pass through a trying experience in order to be prepared for the work He had for me to do. For the past half century my faith in the ultimate triumph of the third angel's message and everything connected with it, has been substantiated by the wonderful experiences through which I have passed. This is why I am anxious to have

my books published and circulated in many languages. I know that the light contained in these books is the light of heaven.”—RH, June 14, 1906.