

# Ellen White:

## Critics and Criticism

By T. Housel Jemison

*From time to time we become aware of someone who is sharing his criticisms of the writings of Ellen White. Sadly, even some Seventh-day Adventists who once held the Spirit of Prophecy in high regard, have made an about-face, and are now doing all they can to promote the "truth" concerning Adventism's "false prophet."*

*We do believe Ellen White's prophetic gift should be tested by the Scriptures, and there is a place for honest questions. However, we have yet to be confronted with a criticism that does not fall into one of two categories: (1) There is what seems to be a reasonable answer to the question or criticism, that does not diminish our understanding of the inspiration, role, and authority of Ellen White's gift of prophecy; or (2) the criticism seems to be of such a minor nature that we can be satisfied that we do not have all the answers at this time, and that God will one day explain all our perplexities.*

*Because many of the criticisms regarding the work of Ellen White are repeating issues that have been raised for decades—some since long before Ellen White passed away—we felt it would be helpful to our many readers for us to reproduce the following overview, which is taken from chapter 22 of T. Housel Jemison's book entitled A Prophet Among You, published in 1955. Copies of this book are available in some Adventist Book Centers.*

*For a more thorough treatment of any of the charges, we highly recommend F. D. Nichol's book Ellen White and Her Critics.— Editors*

**For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy." John 10:33.**

**"Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." John 5:18.**

**"Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.**

**"And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?" John 10:20.**

**"How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" John 7:15.**

Who is this that is being accused of blasphemy, of lawbreaking, of turning people from the ways of the fathers, of devil possession involving insanity, and of a lack of education that caused men to wonder how He could say anything worthwhile? Anyone acquainted with the story of Jesus recognizes immediately that it was He who was the object of these criticisms. Even a perfect life, an unmarred ministry, could not escape the critic's thrust.

Moses also faced, among other things, the charge of exalting himself and assuming unwarranted authority. See Numbers 16:3. Jeremiah too was accused of being a false prophet who was prompted by a friend to give a message according to the friend's ideas. See Acts 26:24; 17:6; 19:26-27.

Whether there is change or stagnation, strong leadership or weakness, clear or muddled thinking, adverse criticism appears to be the lot of those who occupy places of responsibility. At the same time, one who occupies no commanding position, but who still affects the thinking of a large number of persons, is almost always the object of hostile criticism.

Ellen White was and is subject to such criticism. In this chapter we shall give attention to some of the criticisms that have been brought against her work and her writings. In dealing with this case, it is not difficult, for the most part, to find parallel accusations made against the prophets of the Bible. There seem to have been few new criticisms invented with the passage of the centuries.

Criticisms of Ellen White fall largely into a few classifications. It is not necessary to know all the facts about each criticism that might be placed in any classification, for this information is readily obtainable when needed. If we become acquainted with a method of approach to the various **types** of problems, we will accomplish more than we would by trying to keep in mind all the details involved. Following are some of the charges:

## **Nervous disorder**

Prominent among the charges of Ellen White's critics are variations on the theme that her visions resulted from some type of nervous disorder stemming from the injury she suffered as a girl. Hysteria, epilepsy, and schizophrenia are most frequently mentioned. The stories built around these charges have seemed plausible enough to cause a number of persons, who have not taken occasion to investigate the manner of the giving of visions and the life and work of Mrs. White for themselves, to accept and propagate them. In this connection there are two facts to be kept in mind: (1) No scientific evidence is given to support the charges, and (2) the whole ministry of Mrs. White and the body of her writings belie the charges:

**1. No scientific evidence.** When we say that no scientific evidence is given to support the charges, we mean that an investigation of the so-called evidence quickly reveals that it is unsound. Generally, the evidence consists of the testimony of one or another, or all, of three physicians who claimed to know much about Ellen White's physical condition and her visions. Added to these are statements drawn from medical books, which seem to describe some of the physical phenomena accompanying Ellen White's visions.

The three physicians usually quoted are Drs. W. J. Fairfield, William Russell, and J. H. Kellogg. A study of the facts in the case as they are presented in detail by F. D. Nichol, indicates that in none of these instances is acceptable scientific evidence given. It is shown that Dr. Fairfield had no opportunity to examine Mrs. White during a vision; in fact, he does not claim to have done so. He established a medical institution rivaling the Battle Creek Sanitarium, became critical of others connected with that institution, and tried to cause trouble for them. There is no evidence that Dr. Russell ever saw Mrs. White in vision, or that she was a patient of his at any time, and he makes no such claim. No real evidence is presented. In fact, in 1871 Russell repented of his attitude toward James and Ellen White, and he wrote them a letter of confession, which was published in the *Review and Herald*, April 25, 1871. However, this is unmentioned by critics today.

Dr. Kellogg's case differs from that of the other men. For many years he was closely associated with Mrs. White and had abundant opportunity to know of her general physical condition as well as her condition when in vision. But what was Dr. Kellogg's attitude during the years he was associated with Mrs. White? Through these years he repeatedly expressed his conviction that her visions were from God. These expressions appear in published works as well as in letters. It was not until Mrs. White spoke against some of his views and policies that he turned against her, expressed doubts as to the origin of her messages, and refused to accept them. Whatever the factors involved in his reasons for rejection, they were strictly nonmedical.

Weaknesses similar to those appearing in the testimony of the three physicians are seen also in the testimony presented from medical books. The statements quoted may be authentic and authoritative ones, but they are applied to Ellen White, not by a qualified physician, but by a critic. There is nothing scientific in an unqualified person's reading in medical books the symptoms of diseases concerning which the most skilled diagnosticians sometimes differ widely, and from such reading attempting to diagnose a case.

2. The types of disorders of which some critics feel symptoms appeared in Ellen White's experience are types that affect the whole personality and experience. They are disorders for which medical help has been found only in comparatively recent years. Therefore, if Mrs. White were afflicted with any of these

diseases, she would have to be regarded as an untreated case, subject to the progressive ravages of the disease. But the most careful study of her life and writings fails to give the slightest hint of such effects. The comment of the editor of the *New York Independent*, in 1915, previously quoted, "She lived the life and did the work of a worthy prophetess" — gives a clue to the regard in which Mrs. White was held.

Another writer of a biographical sketch showed his attitude in these words: "Mrs. White is a woman of singularly well-balanced mental organization. Benevolence, spirituality, conscientiousness, and ideally are the predominating traits. Her personal qualities are such as to win for her the warmest friendship of all with whom she comes in contact, and to inspire them with the utmost confidence in her sincerity... Notwithstanding her many years of public labor, she has retained all the simplicity and honesty which characterized her early life." — *American Biographical History of Eminent and Self-Made Men*, Michigan volume, page 108 (1878).

The best way to deal with problems regarding Ellen White's physical and mental condition is to become well acquainted with the story of her life and the product of her pen. Her writings reveal clarity of thinking, consistency of treatment, unity of thought, depth of insight, and unique aptness of expression that are signs of a well organized mind and a consistent Christian outlook.

## **False teachings**

Application of the test "to the law and to the testimony" (Isaiah 8:20), some critics say, shows that Ellen White taught some things that are not in the Bible, or were contrary to Bible teachings... To deal adequately with this type of criticism, two things are necessary: (1) a thorough knowledge of what the Bible teaches on the subject, and (2) a complete cross-section of what Ellen White has said on the subject in her various works. The major problems in this area are caused by the fact that she differs from some traditional points of view on Bible teachings which have been held by many individuals, and by the fact that brief portions of passages are sometimes taken out of their setting and made to stand alone. Every doctrine taught by Ellen White will stand the closest scrutiny and comparison with the Scriptures.

## **Suppression**

It is at times charged that Ellen White taught points of view which she later discovered to be incorrect. Then, it is claimed, she changed her teaching, and withdrew from circulation or suppressed the writings containing the error. As examples, certain early works are quoted, which, when they were reprinted, lack some sentences or sections contained in the earlier publication. Or it is urged that certain books were discontinued and others issued in their place to hide the false teachings of the former. Again, what are the facts? Space here permits but a brief summary of the facts presented in detail in *Ellen White and Her Critics*, 267:

It is true that in later publications some portions of earlier ones were omitted. It is also true that some books were replaced by new ones that did not contain every sentence and expression found in the old books. Does this prove that some teachings were suppressed? — Not at all. Charges of deletion and suppression are largely made with reference to three items: (1) a tract, "A Word to the Little Flock," (2) an article in the *Present Truth* of August, 1849, and (3) the book *Sketches From the Life of Paul*. Reasons for the omissions at the time of republication are given by F. D. Nichol in his discussion of this topic. But because of the desire of some persons to have copies of these early documents in their original form, both of the first two items have been reproduced in facsimile form and are easily accessible. Whatever the reasons for the original deletions, they had nothing to do with the suppression of teachings, for the church has no question about circulating them today.<sup>2</sup>

The third item, *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, is said to have been withdrawn from circulation because of a threatened lawsuit over alleged plagiarism. Actually, there was no threatened lawsuit, and no critic has ever presented evidence of such action, although the name of a publisher is sometimes mentioned in this connection. A letter from the publisher, said to have been involved, shows that there was no threatened suit and no grounds for one. *Ellen White and Her Critics*, 456. The edition of *Sketches* was completely sold out, and no copies were recalled. No more were printed, for Ellen White intended to write more fully on the subject of the ministry of the apostles. Work on the new volume was delayed for a number of years because of other responsibilities and bookwork, but in 1911 the new book, *The Acts of the Apostles*, was published.

The early teaching most frequently said to have been suppressed by the removal of portions of early publications is that of the "shut door." Did the first writings teach something different from the later revelations? Again the facts clear away the confusion:

After the disappointment of October 22, 1844, their understanding of the events that had taken place led those who soon became Sabbatarian Adventists to be classified as the "Sabbath and shut-door" brethren, in contrast with the First-day Adventists, who were called the "open-door" Adventists. The reason was this: The Adventist group approaching October 22, 1844, believed that the Lord would appear and probation would close for all men. For a time after the disappointment, those who did not repudiate their belief in the advent message still believed that probation had closed and there was no longer mercy for sinners. However, with the passage of time, they began to recognize that this position was not founded on the Bible, and that there was still a work to be done for sinners. They continued to use the term "shut door," but it came to have a different meaning to them. It took on this significance: Christ had now entered on the second phase of His ministry as High Priest—His ministry in the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary; therefore, He had shut the door to the holy place and opened the door to the Most Holy. The announcement of this change in phases of ministry was, they felt, the responsibility God had given them.

What was Ellen White's relation to these teachings regarding the "shut door"? She explains, in a letter addressed to J. N. Loughborough, a portion of which is quoted here:

"With my brethren and sisters, after the time passed in forty-four I did believe no more sinners would be concerted. But I never had a vision that no more sinners would be converted. And am clear and free to state no one had ever heard me say or has read from my pen statements which will justify them in the charges they have made against me upon this point.

"It was on my first journey east to relate my visions that the precious light in regard to the heavenly sanctuary was opened before me and I was shown the open and shut door. We believed that the Lord was soon to come in the clouds of heaven. I was shown that there was a great work to be done in the world for those that had not had the light and rejected it. Our brethren could not understand this with our faith in the immediate appearing of Christ. Some accused me of saying my Lord delayeth His coming, especially the fanatical ones. I saw that in '44 God had opened a door and no man could shut it, and shut a door and no man could open it. Those who rejected the light which was brought to the world by the message of the second angel went into darkness, and how great was that darkness." Ellen White Letter 2, 1874. The letter in facsimile form appears in F. M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus*, 106, 107.

In *The Great Controversy* Mrs. White, since 1884, has unhesitatingly and frankly kept before the world the shut-door experience of our early believers and the reasons for the position they took. See *The Great Controversy*, 428-432. It is largely the failure on the part of the critics to recognize the change in the significance of the term "shut door" as employed by our pioneers that creates the problem in this case. They make no distinction between Ellen White's early personal belief and what was soon revealed to her, on the basis of which she changed her point of view. F. D. Nichol presents several exhibits revealing that Mrs. White's earliest writings contain clear indications of her belief that there was still opportunity for men to accept the Lord. See F. D. Nichol, *op. cit.*, 239. See also F. M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus*, 90. In the face of facts, the "shut-door" charge collapses.

## Plagiarism

The charge of plagiarism, or literary theft, is made against Ellen White in connection with two books—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, and *The Great Controversy*. It is seldom that any other work or passage is cited, although it is insinuated by critics that large portions of all her writings were the product of the minds and pens of others. Is the insinuation justified? This much is certain: If there were works other than the two specified that would help the critic to build up his case, he would not hesitate or fail to use them.

Consequently, the problem of the accusation of plagiarism may be regarded as limited to these books. Did Ellen White borrow from the writings of others in the preparation of these books? —Yes, she did. Did this borrowing constitute plagiarism? — We think not. Actually, there are two phases to the matter of

plagiarism—the moral and the legal. Morally, the major question is: Was there an attempt on the part of the author to deceive her readers into thinking that the material she had borrowed was completely her own? Take *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, for example:

The first notice of the publication of *Sketches* to appear in the *Review and Herald* was in the issue of October 9, 1883. In the advertisement the publishers called particular attention to the book from which critics say Ellen White copied large portions—Conybeare and Howson's *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*.

The publishers of the *Review and Herald* said: "While the well-known work of Conybeare and Howson completely outstrips all its predecessors as a full and reliable history of the life and epistles of Paul, even that excellent book comes altogether short of taking the place of this humble volume." To all intent and purposes they were inviting comparison of the two books. But what about Mrs. White? Was she as free as her publishers to direct attention to the Conybeare and Howson book, or did she try to prevent people from reading it so that they might not discover that she had used some material from it?

Only a few months before the *Review and Herald* notice of the publication of Mrs. White's *Sketches*, there was widespread promotion of the Conybeare and Howson book as a premium with subscriptions to the *Review and Herald* and the *Signs of the Times*. Mrs. White did her part in helping the promotion of the book by writing a statement that was included in the *Signs of the Times* of February 22, 1883. "*The Life of St. Paul*" by Conybeare and Howson, I regard as a book of great merit, and one of rare usefulness to the earnest student of the New Testament." Certainly none can say justifiably that Mrs. White tried to hide the fact that she had used some material from the other book on the life of Paul. There was no attempt on her part to deceive her readers.

What about the legal phase of the matter? Did she use so much that the value of the older book was diminished or that she appropriated the labor of its authors to their injury? F. D. Nichol's thorough investigation of the extent and nature of the matter used reveals that both of these questions must be answered negatively. What was used was not excessive in amount and was background material related only indirectly to the development of the spiritual theme found in *Sketches From the Life of Paul*.

What has been said of *Sketches* could also be said of *The Great Controversy*. The books from which historical material was quoted or paraphrased were books that were in many Seventh-day Adventists' libraries, some of them books Mrs. White had highly recommended to be read by the members of the church. Again there was no attempt to deceive. And legally, neither the amount of material nor the use made of it justifies any question. Morally or legally there is no problem of Plagiarism. See *Ellen White and Her Critics* for a fuller discussion and full documentation.

Critics charge that numerous predictions made by Ellen White have failed of being fulfilled. Is this so? The prediction most commonly brought up is one made in 1856, currently published in *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 131-132: "I was shown the company present at the Conference. Said the angel: 'Some food for worms some subjects of the seven last plagues, some will be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus.'" All present at the conference are dead, says the critic, therefore Ellen White is a false prophet. We freely admit that during the century that has passed since that conference those who were in attendance have died. But we do not admit that the critic's conclusion based on this fact is a necessary conclusion. On the contrary, a consideration of all the facts involved shows the conclusion to be wholly unwarranted.

As a basis for considering this problem, it would be profitable to review the matter of conditional prophecy... All of God's promises of blessing or threatenings of punishment are made upon condition, whether or not the condition is specifically stated. God's ultimate purposes, of course, cannot be altered by any decision of man, but the coming of blessing or punishment in fulfillment of the prediction is dependent upon whether man's relationship with God remains the same or changes. That was true with Jonah; it was true with the children of Israel throughout their history.

The fact of the Second Advent of Christ cannot be altered by anything that man can do. Christ will return the second time to gather the righteous and destroy the wicked, then again to create a new earth as a home for His people. All the combined hosts of men and evil angels cannot alter that fact. But there is a place where men come into the picture. Peter tells us that it is possible for men to hasten the day of Christ's return. "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God!" 2 Peter 3:11-12, RSV. If it is possible for men to hasten the Lord's return, obviously it is possible for them to delay it by their failure to complete the work entrusted to them to be done in their own lives and for others.

What is the bearing of all this on the question of the conference of 1856? —Simply this: The obvious intent of the words spoken by the angel and heard by Mrs. White in vision was to convey the idea that Christ was to return during the lifetime of some who were present at the conference. Now, as far as we know, all those persons are dead. Does that mean that Christ is not going to return? —Not at all. But it raises the question as to whether some change has come about that has made it necessary for the Lord to delay His return— even as the destruction of Nineveh was delayed beyond the days of the prophet Jonah. During the years following this prediction, while there as still abundant opportunity for it to be fulfilled to the letter. Ellen White gave a number of indications that conditions among God's people were such that they were even then delaying the Second Advent:

"To become impatient now would be to lose all our earnest, persevering watching heretofore. The long night of gloom is trying; but the morning is deferred in mercy, because if the Master should come, so many would be found unready. God's unwillingness to have His people perish has been the reason for so long delay." *Testimonies*, vol. 2, 194 (1868).

"If all who had labored unitedly in the work in 1844, had received the third angel's message and proclaimed it in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts. A flood of light would have been shed upon the world. Years ago the inhabitants of the earth would have been warned, the closing work completed, and Christ would have come for the redemption of His people." *The Great Controversy*, page 291 (1886), or page 458 of the current trade edition.

"Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving to the world the message of mercy, Christ would, ere this, have come to the earth, and the saints would have received their welcome into the city of God." *Testimonies*, vol. 6, 450 (1900).

"We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years, as did the children of Israel; but for Christ's sake, His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course of action." *Evangelism*, 696 (1901).

These are only a few of the statements that run in this vein. The prediction of 1856 has not been fulfilled, but the reasons are clearly given. We cannot regard predictions given through Ellen White in an entirely different light from that in which we look at Bible predictions. Both must be viewed from the same point. In dealing with any prediction, either in the Bible or in these messages for the last days, we must be careful to learn all the facts possible involved in its fulfillment or its nonfulfillment. This is not a matter to be dealt with on the basis of what appears on the surface, but one for careful consideration before any conclusion is reached. The Nichol book (pp. 102, 112) touches on a number of predictions that critics claim are unfulfilled. Attention should be given to them so that one is at least aware of the criticism and knows where to turn for help in finding an answer.

### **The life of the Prophet**

Of only One is it written that He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15. The rest of us are characterized by the words of Paul: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23. The classification fits each individual— whether prophet or not. The fact that we see today that there was sin in the lives of some of the Bible prophets after they had been called to the prophetic office in no wise invalidates the instruction God gave through them. God knew the kind of men He was dealing with and did the best He could with the material He had to work with. Today, what we

remember about these men is not the sin that was in their lives, but the truth of the gospel that God chose to reveal through them. Prophets needed the working of that gospel in their own hearts as did the people to whom they preached and wrote.

Critics have tried to build a case against accepting the teachings of Ellen White by attempting to show that her life was not always in full harmony with her teachings. Most certainly we would not try to establish that after revelation from God began to come to this messenger, she never made another mistake and always acted in complete accord with every detail of the instruction she passed on to the church. This would be placing her in a class apart from and above ancient prophets. On the other hand, the critic is unjustified in holding Ellen White to a standard to which neither he nor anyone else holds Bible prophets. What has been said is not for the purpose of preparing the way to say that the critics have been right in some of their charges against Mrs. White's personal experience, but that that is something to be expected. The facts are that it is relatively easy to show that in the matters usually selected by the critics to build their case against Mrs. White's character, her course of action was not contrary to the principles she taught. Perhaps meeting three charges will be sufficient to show the tenor of the criticisms and make it plain that the facts dispel the charges:

### **Health Reform**

A frequently heard charge is that Ellen White did not live according to the health reform principles she taught. One point that is emphasized is that she used flesh as food after giving instruction that the flesh diet should be abandoned. It is not necessary to review here what has been said on the subject of flesh diet; we are dealing only with Ellen White's relation to the counsel. A good summary of the instruction will be found in *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 373. Mrs. White's experience as a health reformer appears as an appendix to the book. See *ibid.*, 481-494.

In 1894 Ellen White wrote: "Since the Lord presented before me, in June, 1863, the subject of meat eating in relation to health, I have left the use of meat... I have lived for nearly one year without meat." *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4, 153. But, says the critic, it is known that Mrs. White ate meat after that time. He is right, but he is not producing evidence of something that had been hidden by Mrs. White. The eating of flesh was not her practice, but in 1890 she stated clearly: "When I could not obtain the food I needed, I have some times eaten a little meat; but I am becoming more and more afraid of it." *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 394. In 1895 she wrote: "Since the camp meeting at Brighton (January 1894) I have absolutely banished meat from my table. It is an understanding that whether I am at home or abroad, nothing of this kind is to be used in my family, or come upon my table." *Ibid.* 488.

But, the critic continues, "We are informed, by those who knew, that she used flesh after that time." In a section in *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 159, dealing directly with this subject, Ellen White, in 1909, commented on this: "It is reported by some that I have not followed the principles of health reform as I have advocated them with my pen; but I can say that I have been a faithful health reformer. Those who have been members of my family know that this is true." In this instance one must make a choice—between the word of the critic and the word of the one who has borne such a multitude of messages of truth. Some have gone so far as to say that during the last days of Mrs. White's life she called for and ate meat. While she makes no comment that late, the testimony of one who cared for her during her last illness will be of interest.

Speaking of the time she spent as Ellen White's nurse during the last months of her life, Mrs. Carrie Hungerford wrote: "In regard to her changing her ideas about health reform, she never did. Why should she, when the Lord had shown her about it? She never ate meat or fish, nor were they in her house. Even butter was not served on her table while I was there.

"I was sent on duty by the [Saint Helena] Sanitarium the a.m. following Sister White's accident, February 1915, and was with her until she breathed her last, July 16. Friday night as the sun was setting, she passed to her rest." Letter to Alonzo J. Wearer, January 11, 1953.

The facts do not support the critics' charges.

## **Debt**

A charge that has been freely circulated is one to the effect that, although Mrs. White taught that the members of the church should shun debt as they would leprosy, she died heavily in debt and that the church had to meet these obligations. It is true that in her writings Ellen White frequently warned against debt. She spoke against personal and institutional debts arising from failure to manage so that income would meet expenses. It is also true that she died owing a considerable sum of money. Then did her practice differ widely from her teaching? The facts concerning why and how her debts were incurred and how they were liquidated, present a picture very different from the critics' representations:

Mrs. White always lived economically. No indebtedness was incurred to supply her needs. But demands upon her for the work of the Lord were heavy, both for donations to worthy enterprises and for the publishing for her books. At times she found it necessary to borrow money to meet these demands. She did so knowing that there was an assured income from her book royalties to meet the resulting obligations. As she neared the end of her life there were a number of projects that she wished to see completed before her death. To accomplish these ends in the furtherance of the Lord's work, she mortgaged the assured future income from her books.

In harmony with the provisions of her will (February 1912), all obligations standing at the time of her death have been cleared from the income she designated for that purpose. No loss was sustained by any private individual or by the denomination. Since the obligations have been met, all royalties on the Ellen White books are paid into the treasury of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. When the facts are known there is no occasion for criticism. Additional information will be found in F. D. Nichol, *Ellen White and Her Critics*, 523.

## **Owning Property**

Did Ellen White hold large and valuable properties at the same time that she counseled the members of the church to dispose of all they had and give to the Lord? There are critics who maintain that this was the case.

Perhaps we should note first that we have no record of Ellen White's telling Seventh-day Adventists that the time had come for all to sell all their property and give the money to the church. She did counsel against adding lands to lands, and property to property, for the sake of the accumulation of wealth. But she also taught that it was good for people to own their own homes, and lay a little money aside to care for themselves in case of emergency. See *The Adventist Home*, 372-373, 395. She indicated that the disposition of property was an individual matter, and that if the earnest Christian placed his property in the hands of the Lord, it would be made plain to him when he should sell it. See *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 734.

What about her own property holdings? At the time usually pointed out by the critics, Ellen White owned about two hundred acres of land. Of this seemingly large area, held for a few years by Mrs. White, one hundred and twenty acres were a wooded hillside, purchased for \$550 so that the wood might be cut for fuel for herself and her workers. Some timber was sold to neighbors, and needy persons were given employment cutting wood. One Hundred and twenty acres may sound like a good deal of land, but its value, \$4.58 an acre, was small, except for the purpose for which it had been purchased. After the timber had been cut from the hillside, the land was traded for some lots in the town of Saint Helena, a few miles from Mrs. White's Elmshaven home. Some of the lots were donated for the purpose of building a church school in Saint Helena. Possession of a home on a moderate-sized plot of farm and grazing land is not out of harmony with the principle set out in Mrs. White's writings. See Nichol, *Ellen White and Her Critics*, 520.

## **Conclusion**

What sort of conclusion should we draw from this brief review of a few of the charges made against Ellen White and her work?

Perhaps we are not as yet ready to draw final conclusions other than that it is never safe to accept any charge of a critic without making much careful investigation and gathering as many facts as possible about

the case in hand. It has been demonstrated repeatedly that the life and work of Ellen White do not suffer as a result of honest investigation. The more the whole experience is studied, the more firmly one becomes convinced that here are messages sent from God through a messenger whose earnest endeavor was to live a life matched to the messages.