

THE WHITE ESTATE ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

Things you wanted to know, but didn't know whom to ask

BY TIM POIRIER

Questions regarding certain aspects of Ellen White's inspiration and authority have been raised and discussed in recent years, and no doubt related issues will stimulate us to study further on these subjects in the future. At the same time, questions come into the Ellen G. White Estate each day on a vast variety of subjects, not always as multifaceted as the topic of inspiration. Some questions are perennial, such as Will we have another prophet? Others inquire about the genuineness of a statement attributed to Ellen White. Some reveal simple curiosity about Ellen White as a person.

Because one person's question is often another's, this article presents some frequently asked questions. We begin with two quotations that understandably have received increased circulation in 1988.

Question: In what context do the following statements appear?

"I saw that Jones and Waggoner had their counterpart in Joshua and Caleb. As the children of Israel stoned the spies with literal stones, you have stoned these brethren with stones of sarcasm and ridicule. I saw that you willfully rejected what you know to be truth just because it was too humiliating to your dignity. I saw some of you in your tents mincing and making all manner of fun of these two brethren. I also saw that if you had accepted their message we would have been in the kingdom two years from that date, but now

we have to go back into the wilderness and there stay forty years" (*Review and Herald*, c. 1892).

"In 1888, at the General Conference held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the angel of Revelation 18:1 came down to do his work and was ridiculed, criticized, and rejected. And when the message he brings again swells into a loud cry it will be ridiculed, spoken against, and rejected by the majority" ("Taking Up a Reproach").

Answer: These somewhat sensational statements have circulated for more than 50 years, with various references, but they are *spurious*. While certain expressions in them parallel *Testimonies to Ministers*, pages 468, 469, these statements are not a part of Ellen White's writings, published or unpublished. Whenever an obscure or uncertain reference appears for an Ellen White quotation, it is always advisable to check on the accuracy of the reference and the authenticity of the statement.

Question: Why are some of Ellen White's writings still "unreleased" if nothing is being kept from the church? What is a "manuscript release"?

Answer: The confusion results from the way the term *release* is used in other circles. For example, when a newspaper reports on a new study or statistic "just released" by

the U.S. Government, the newspaper is saying that the statistic had not been available up to that time. In contrast, *all* of Ellen White's writings, published and unpublished, are available for reading and study. By "released," the White Estate means that statements have been processed and approved by the White Estate board for *publication*. This involves grammatical editing, correction of misspellings, insertion of missing punctuation, etc.

Each month scores of pages of previously unpublished E. G. White materials are released by the White Estate as requested by researchers. These releases are numbered consecutively and are being published in a series of volumes entitled *Manuscript Releases*, volume one; *Manuscript Releases*, volume two; etc.

Question: Was Ellen White the only Seventh-day Adventist in her family? What about her brothers and sisters?

Answer: Of the eight Harmon children, two became active Seventh-day Adventists: Ellen and her sister Sarah, whose son was hymnist F. E. Belden. While actual records of church membership are difficult to establish for those early years, we know that both of Ellen White's parents died in the hope of the third angel's message, as did her brother Robert, who died a little more than 10 years before the church officially organized, in 1863. Mary, six years older than Ellen, considered herself a Seventh-day Adventist, although her inhibitions kept her from fully practicing her faith.

Ellen White maintained close relationships with her remaining three sisters (including her twin, Elizabeth), and her older brother, John, sending them copies of her books and subscriptions to Adventist journals. Describing a visit with her sisters shortly before their father died, Ellen White wrote, "Although