

*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

"BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM!
Come out to meet Him."

(Matt. 25:6 RSV)



THE GREAT CONTROVERSY CONTROVERSY

This year has witnessed an intense controversy over the book, The Great Controversy, as well as a widespread distribution of the various editions of the book. The book is not only being printed by the denominational press, but various independent ministries are printing the book in paperback editions. Further, this year saw the launching of a campaign to advertise the book in the Time magazine timed to coincide with the 1990 General Conference session. Due to the confrontation at the session between the dissidents and members of the hierarchy, the controversy over The Great Controversy reached a new height and involved what was termed, "condensations" of the book.

Two articles have appeared in the Arkansas Catholic, one a release by the Catholic News Service (CNS) (July 29, 1990, p. 8), reproduced in Commentary (IV-3, p. 6); the other an article by Deborah Hilliard of the local staff of the Little Rock Diocesan paper (Sept. 9, 1990). Both of these articles involved the controversy in Adventism over The Great Controversy. The latter article concerned the distribution of the 662 page paperback edition by Charles Wheeling and comments quoting Elder Kenneth Wood, chairman of the Ellen G. White Estate. Before commenting on any of the factors involved, the factual evidence needs to be presented first. In a letter dated, September 21, 1990, I wrote to Elder Wood as follows:

You will find enclosed a copy of an article by Deborah Hilliard from the Arkansas Catholic under date of September 9, 1990.

In this article, you will find some sloppy journalism. Charles Wheeling is named Charles Wheeler. You are listed as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as well as the Ellen G. White Estate. However, you are quoted in direct quotes from an alleged telephone call. My question is, have you been quoted accurately, and in context, or inaccurately and out of context? If the former, please verify, and if the latter, please give me the correct statements in context.

The points in question are: 1) The books being published do not reflect what Ellen G. White was writing about. 2) The

books are being published without authorization. And 3) These books - condensations at 662 pages? - are "absolute trash."

On October 1, 1990, Elder Wood replied. He wrote:

On my desk is a copy of the September 9 Arkansas Catholic, sent to me by Deborah Hilliard soon after it was published. I read it with increasing dismay as I noticed the numerous errors it contained, including the exceptionally influential office assigned to me! However, having been misquoted frequently during the 27 years that I was one of the editors of the Review, I laid the story aside, believing that those who know me would separate truth from error.

Let me say at the outset that I do not impugn the motives of Deborah Hilliard. I believe that she was sincere in what she wrote, even though she printed some inaccuracies and misunderstood some things that I was saying. I think she picked up the word trash from the news reports that circulated in Indianapolis at the time of the General Conference session. You certainly know that I would not speak of The Great Controversy as trash.

What I did object to was Charles Wheeling's retitling The Great Controversy as America in Prophecy. I felt, and still do feel, that it was wrong of Charles Wheeling to reprint the 1888 edition of The Great Controversy without communicating with the Ellen G. White Estate, and giving the book a title that sensationalizes and cheapens the serious theme of the book, which shows the struggle between Christ and Satan throughout the millenniums.

One thing I have learned about trying to make corrections: often they only create further misunderstandings. Elder Nichol recounted an experience that he had had with the back page of the Review before 1955, when I joined the staff. He said that they had published a mistake on the back page and the following week put in a correction. Unfortunately, there was a mistake in the correction, so the next week they tried again but made a further mistake. After three tries he said that they decided to let the matter alone. In general people believe what they want to believe. Friends put the best possible construction on one's words; others give credence to misquotations and inaccuracies.

After reading Elder Wood's letter, it was evident to me that given the article (See p. 4) it was incumbent that I contact Ms. Hilliard and hear her side of the story. I called her on October 5, and she indicated that she had typed Elder Wood's responses as she was talking to him on the telephone. After the publication of the article she sent him a copy. To the date, she had received no response thus assumed the complete accuracy of her report. I noted with

her certain technical inaccuracies, such as Wood's position, and Charles Wheeling as Charles Wheeler. She seemed appreciative and did not note a negative attitude. She did recognize that in assembling data from the telephone conversation with Elder Wood, she could have been more specific in noting Wood's remark - "absolute trash" - was in the discussion of the tract, "United States in Prophecy," rather than Wheeling's paperback edition of The Great Controversy under the title, America In Prophecy. As can be observed, the actual paragraph containing Wood's outburst reads - "Wood called the unauthorized condensations of White's book, 'absolute trash.'" Wheeling's paperback is not a condensation, but rather the 1888 edition of The Great Controversy.

In discussing the facts regarding The Great Controversy, its various editions, and the events during 1990 in which the book became an issue, it is nearly impossible to objectively review the issues involved because of the highly charged emotional factor. By many the book itself is sacrosanct. Then compound this with the fact that the tract, called "trash" in an off-the-cuff outburst by Ms. Burton, and "absolute trash" by Wood, is a combination of a Ferrell publication and nondesignated quotes from the latter chapters of the book, and you have a volatile mixture. The real issue which finally surfaced - the Church's changing attitude toward the Papacy - is clouded in the emotional veneration for Ellen G. White. Recognizing all of these factors and the risks involved in dealing with such an emotionally charged issue, it is still our conviction that certain facts need to be addressed.

First the advertising in Time magazine: Some who have carefully read it, report that nowhere can one find Jesus Christ mentioned. If this be so, some questions need to be asked. In the book of Revelation from which we draw our Scriptural support that the "remnant" is to have restored to it the gift of prophecy, it is called "the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Rev. 12:17) Then should not Jesus be exalted rather than a dead instrument? If we exalt a human being, dead or alive, is this not idolatry? How much difference is there between this and the exaltation of Mary by Papal Rome? Why then decry the Church's approach to the Papacy, while the same approach doctrinally is inherent in the advertisement in Time magazine?

In this controversy over The Great Controversy, there has arisen the matter of condensations. Is not Testimony Treasures a condensation? How do we describe the book - The Story of

Redemption? In the "Foreword" written under the name of the "Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications," is this paragraph:

For some years there has been felt a need, both in America and abroad, for a brief but all-inclusive presentation of this great theme, giving in one compact [condensed?] volume the high points of the whole sweep of the story of the conflict of the ages as it was revealed to Mrs. White. This need is now met in this volume, The Story of Redemption, made possible by selecting and grouping in their natural order certain portions of the concise accounts as they appeared in the earlier volumes, long since out of print. As noted in the table of contents, this vivid account has been drawn from Spirit of Prophecy, volumes 1, 3, and 4, The Signs of the Times, and Early Writings (Spiritual Gifts, volume 1). (p. 10)

Would we call this book, "trash" or "absolute trash." Hardly. The issue from Kenneth Wood's viewpoint is who does the condensing and/or publishing of the works of Ellen G. White. Quite naturally from his position as Chairman of the Board of the E. G. White Estate, he feels that this is a legitimate concern. Further, when Charles Wheeling refuses to enter into an exchange with Elder Wood over the matter something is seriously wrong. Simple Christian courtesy has certain demands on an individual who professes Christianity. One wonders why Charles Wheeling is even interested in producing and distributing The Great Controversy as a paperback edition, given the teachings on prophecy which he has been promoting. The principle of prophetic interpretation used in The Great Controversy is certainly not the apotelesmatic concept promoted by Dr. Desmond Ford, which Wheeling uses.

In connection with the paperback edition which Charles Wheeling is producing, Wood decried his giving "the book a title that sensationalizes and cheapens the serious theme of the book, which shows the struggle between Christ and Satan throughout the millenniums." (See letter quoted on p. 2) Wood has a valid point in this objection. The closest release by title to the objective perceived by Ellen G. White by vision was the set which placed the title - The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan - on four volumes covering the time from the inception of sin, until sin shall be no more. It was not until the 1888 edition that the title was applied exclusively to the present Great Controversy. The present set of books of which the 1911 edition is a part is called in its entirety - "The Conflict of the Ages Series." This does reflect the original intent.

In 1848, Ellen White received her first vision

regarding the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Ten years later at Lovett's Grove in Ohio, this vision was repeated and she was instructed "to write it out." (Life Sketches, p. 162) From this basic vision given in 1858 came first Spiritual Gifts, Vol. I to be followed by Volumes III & IV (Vol. II was autobiographical). This was followed in the years from 1870 to 1884 with the four volume set either published under the title of Spirit of Prophecy or The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan. Then starting in 1888 with the revised Vol. IV of the previous four volume set through 1916 with the posthumous publication of Prophets and Kings, emerged what we call "The Conflict of the Ages" series. Keep in mind that for all of these books was just one basic vision in 1858.

It should be obvious by now to any reader of this article that we are faced with various editions of the book - The Great Controversy. So the question arises which edition should we use - the 1884, the 1888, or the 1911? To simplify the question, we can observe that the differences between the 1911 edition and the 1888 edition are largely cosmetic. However, the changes between the 1884 edition and the 1888 edition do present some major difficulties. One brother whose service has been both in the paramedical field and pastoral ministry carefully compared the two editions, page by page, paragraph by paragraph, even noting word alterations. From this painstaking endeavor, he summarized the differences in a copy we have in our library. In the 1888 edition, 186 pages were added, and 38 pages omitted. Behind these changes is a story of a manuscript which has not been published because the Ellen G. White Estate will not release for publication certain key documents upon which this research is based.

In the summer of 1973, D. R. McAdams who was then connected with the history department of Andrews University spent two months at the White Estate in Washington D.C. While there he became aware of several manuscripts which have been accepted as portions of the first draft of The Great Controversy. The longest of these was composed of 64 sheets of full-sized writing paper, with 11 pages filling some portion of the back of the sheets. All was on Huss. (Handwritten autographs of the writings of Ellen G. White are rare. Unless the Estate is still hiding such copies, the originals behind the published writings are the typed pages by her secretaries.) While McAdams notes various historical facets in his manuscript involving



By Deborah Hilliard

Anti-Catholic books distributed at Little Rock intersection

Little Rock - In the latest round of anti-Catholic activity in Arkansas, a man who a source said refused to identify himself was handing out anti-Catholic material in late August.

The man was distributing copies of *America in Prophecy*, a 662-page reprint of *The Great Controversy*, a book originally published in 1888 by Seventh Day Adventist "founder and prophet" Ellen G. White. One of at least two unauthorized condensations or reprints of the century-old work, the recently-published book was printed in Jemison, AL, by Inspiration Books East, a company with no listed telephone number. Seventh Day Adventist spokespersons said the book is published by Charles Wheeler, an independent evangelist and former Adventist whose credentials were pulled by the church's world headquarters in Silver Spring, MD. Wheeler, known to Adventist spokespersons as an evangelist with a penchant for predicting the end of the world, could not be located.

The book lists the author's name as "E.G. White."

The book was distributed near the University of Arkansas at Little Rock campus by a man who refused to identify himself or his affiliation, according to one recipient, who said the books were stored on the roadside in a

crate-like box.

Kenneth H. Wood, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Seventh Day Adventists General Conference and the Ellen G. White Estate, said that White's 19th-century writings, which accused Catholics and Jews of being religious "harlots," is being manipulated by splinter groups to "cause trouble."

"These people who put a new title [on White's original work] don't reflect what she was writing," said Wood in a telephone interview with *Arkansas Catholic*. "The Seventh Day Adventists are very much opposed to this kind of thing. These people are publishing these books without any authorization" from the General Conference, he said.

Wood said that splinter groups are "causing trouble" for the 100-year-old church group, a religious body plagued by unfavorable publicity following a verbal fracas at its 55th world convention held in Indianapolis, IN, in July. At the gathering, Adventists clashed in their reactions to anti-Catholic pamphlets distributed in that city by a Tennessee faction of the church. While some Adventists renounced the tract as "trash," others insisted that anti-Catholicism is a crucial part of traditional Adventist doctrine. The pamphlet called Catholicism a pagan religion and refers

to the pope as a "beast."

"The people who distribute the things are not really trying to understand what Seventh Day Adventists believe, even though they consider themselves to be Adventists," Wood said. He added that he has tried repeatedly to communicate with Wheeler, who has refused to return correspondence.

Wood called the unauthorized condensations of White's book "absolute trash."

America in Prophecy contains anti-Catholic material on almost every one of its 662 pages, and reprints White's century-old warning that unless Protestants wake up to the dangers of "Romanism," the Catholic Church will take over and destroy the U.S.

Arkansas has been plagued in recent months by anti-Catholic activity centered around literature and radio speeches by "Holy Alamo Church" founder Tom Alamo, a long-time anti-Catholic evangelist currently in hiding from a federal warrant for fleeing a child abuse charge in California. Alamo gained notoriety for refusing to pay employees for working in his church-owned motel and restaurant in Alma, the Ozark town in northwest Arkansas where Alamo claimed his followers worked in exchange for bed and board in the barbed-wire compound nearby.

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Kellogg and others, our primary focus from this manuscript is the documentation given of events in 1887 involving the 1888 edition of The Great Controversy. In 1887, the White's, Ellen G. W. C. and his wife along with Marian Davis were in Basel, Switzerland, working with B. L. Whitney, who was head of the publishing house there. They were preparing for a French and German translation of the book, The Great Controversy. In a letter dated, April 15, W. C. White wrote to C. H. Jones, manager of the Pacific Press, that "as we criticize the work for translation, we find places where it can be improved for the new English edition. Chapter five is very short and Mother is writing more about Huss and Jerome." (Quoted in Ellen G. White and the Portestant Historians, p. 30; emphasis supplied) In a second letter dated May 18, W. C. White wrote:

"...we found parts of the subject that were very briefly treated, because the reader was supposed to be familiar with the subject. Mother has given attention to all these points, and has thought that the book ought to be so corrected and enlarged, as to be of the most possible good to the large number of promiscuous [non-Adventist] readers to whom it is now being offered. And she has taken hold with a remarkable energy to fill in parts that are rather too brief.

Mother has written enough about Huss and Jerome, to make one or more new chapters. She has written something about Zwingli, and may speak of Calvin. The chapter on the Two Witnesses has been doubled in size, and quite a change will be made in the chapter on William Miller. And some important additions are made to "The Sanctuary" chapter. (ibid.)

In the last letter quoted in the manuscript, dated July 21, White writes to Jones as follows:

It was immediately after chapter 4, that the largest additions were to be made, and while we were all together, it seemed advisable to devote attention to the corrections and additions to be made in other parts of the book, leaving the manuscripts for chapters 5, 6, and 7 to be prepared by Sr. Davis after Mother had gone from Basel. The work of preparing these is now nearly completed, and will soon be sent to her in England for examination. (p. 31)

McAdams follows these quotes from the W. C. White letters to C. H. Jones with a series of questions. They are:

Could it be that Ellen White turned over to Marion Davis her rough draft manuscript on Huss (as well as the material on Wycliffe, Jerome and half of the material on Luther, chapters 5, 6, and 7 of the 1888 Great Controversy) to prepare in her absence, only to be sent to her in England for a final examination? Could it be that

it was Marion Davis who cut out half of the material in the manuscript I am quoting in this study and added additional pages from Wylie? (ibid.)

To these, we might add two: 1) Could Marion Davis have made deletions from Ellen G. White's handwritten autograph and added additional pages from Wylie's History of Protestantism, without the approval of W. C. White? 2) Does the approval of the written material of another by one possessed of the prophetic gift make such writings inspired? If the answer to #2 is "Yes" then you have to confront the significance of Ellen G. White's approval of the messages of Jones and Waggoner, plus Daniel and Revelation by Uriah Smith. If the answer is "No" then one must face the reality of the 1888 edition of The Great Controversy.

In the light of this controversy over The Great Controversy, there is merit in what Prescott wrote to W. C. White in a personal letter dated April 6, 1915. It read in part:

The way your mother's writings have been handled and the false impression concerning them which is still fostered among the people have brought great perplexity and trial to me. It seems to me that what amounts to deception, though probably not intentional, has been practiced in making some of her books, and that no serious effort has been made to disabuse the minds of the people of what was known to be their wrong view concerning her writings. But it is no use to go into these matters. I have talked with you for years about them, but it brings no change. I think however that we are drifting toward a crisis which will come sooner or later, and perhaps sooner. A very strong feeling of reaction has already set in.

Prescott was not a prophet, but he did know some things which have in recent decades come to light. We dare not continue to walk in the darkness of ignorance.

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