

“THE WHITE QUESTION”

Text: 2 Chron. 20:20

Campmeeting Series 2015 #5, GGSDA, 9/5/15

INTRO. A. Old story-- about **RON HALVORSEN** holding meetings in London. First potluck, new baptized members brought fish. One dear old saint had to tell them--“Not supposed to bring fish.” “I thought Jesus ate fish.” **“Yes, but He didn’t have EGW yet!”** As if Ellen White more truth than Jesus!

B. Hilda is in charge of the displays at the Library at the University. Wanted to do something, 100th anniversary of Ellen White’s death. She often makes little figures of people. I came around the corner into the Living Room, see somebody sitting there, Hilda, there’s somebody in the Living Room—It’s Ellen White! She’s been gone 100 years. The world keeps on moving, changing—but what she wrote stops. Now what?

C. You know her story--Born in 1827, Portland, Maine, died 100 years ago, 1915. Someone throws a rock, hits her in the face, 9 years old, 3rd grade, never goes back to school. Kicked out of the Methodist Church for following William Miller, starting having visions at 17, 2000 visions. 70,000 pages. Steps to Christ 100 million copies.

D. Many of us grew up--she was “inerrant,” every word came straight from God, SS quarterlies were mostly just EGW quote, every argument, whoever could say “Well, Ellen White says...” first--that settled it.

E. But biggest debates have been—in my lifetime. Desmond Ford, when people said, EGW said there was an Investigative Judgment, said, she never meant for her writings to be the basis for doctrines. Ron Numbers—all her ideas about health came from other people. Walter Rea, many others, two columns, EGW, other books, clear that she had those books open in front of her, didn’t always put quotation marks. They said she was “historically conditioned”--Got many of her ideas, not from visions, but from the people around her. America was heavily anti-Catholic back then, that came into Great Controversy. People were making Sunday laws, so she put that into the Last Days. It came out, she used secretaries, her husband fixed things, asked a historian to fix dates—if getting every word straight from God, how could ordinary people change anything?

F. I have a relative who was literally beat black and blue with Messages to Young People. All of us have struggled to live up to everything in the books. I was on a summer witnessing team where they made us eat only 2 meals a day, no sugar, no fruits and vegetables in the same meal, no liquids with your meal. We all hated it, girl I was dating that summer, sat there crying, wanted to be a good Christian, hated all of it. One pastor, friend of mine, Celebration Ch in Portland, dumped all her books into trash can, during sermon. I chose to keep her. See what you think today.

H. **JOEL 2:28 “In the Last Days I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.” 2 CHRONICLES 20:20 “Believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.” BUT MATTHEW 24:24 “There will be false Christs and false prophets.” 1 THESSALONIANS 5:21 “Test everything. Hold on to the good.”**

I. WHAT IS HER RELATIONSHIP TO THE BIBLE? A. We are Protestants, *sola scriptura*, The Bible and the Bible alone. EGW herself said--“**The Bible, and the Bible only, is the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms.**” FB#1—“**The authoritative source of doctrines**” Her writings to be the “**Lesser light,**” the Bible the **greater light.**” Ev 257.

B. After the Desmond Ford issue--**REVIEW** came out with a one-page summary of what we believe and what we don’t believe--have some at the doors when you leave--We believe that Ellen White and the Bible equal inspiration--but closed canon--“**We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White may be used as the basis of doctrine.**” **Ron Graybill—normative, formative.** The Bible is the norm, Ellen White was **formative**, part of the process when we were establishing our beliefs and doctrines. I don’t need EGW for a single one of my beliefs. She could be proven to be a complete fraud, wouldn’t change my Adventism one inch. That old lady in England was wrong, we don’t judge Jesus by EGW--we judge Ellen White by Jesus.

C. Too many Adventists would just look up what she said about any text--that settled it. Ministry--“**We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White exhaust the meaning of Scripture.**” We cannot use her as the final referee or commentary. Didn’t appreciate it when her writings were used to settle issues. The Bible.

D. **“Our position and faith is in the Bible. And never do we want any soul to bring in the Testimonies ahead of the Bible.”** Ev. 256. You’ve heard of HMS Richards, VOP. Father, HMJ Richards, pastor in CO. On the platform, Ellen White drove up. invited her to speak. No, you have a sermon, I’ll listen to you. Preached to EGW! Before she left, asked her—**How should we use your writings?** “Go to the Bible, get everything you can out of the Bible, Then go to the Testimonies, may help clarify something. But then when you go before the people—**PREACH THE BIBLE!**”

II. INCARNATIONAL MODEL: A. We have had this battle for 170 years now. Compass—due north--pure God, message comes straight from God, God dictates it word for word, no real human involvement, purely supernatural, stainless-steel pipe, infallible, inerrant. Due south—pure man, only man’s ideas about God—nothing supernatural, all natural. Due north is where I grew up. God dictated the Bible, EGW, word for word. Why people had a hard time, secretaries editing EGW. ****Why I had such a hard time—Gospels, stories in different order. Same stories, Different words. I couldn’t stand it, if can’t trust the details, how trust the message?** EGW quoted the verse, “The love of Christ constraineth us, said Peter said it. No, it was Paul. She wrote about a certain bell—someone checked—wrong bell. Famous story—number of rooms at **Paradise Valley hospital**—said it was 38—somebody counted, 40. Spectrum printed minutes, big meetings, 1919, 4 years after she died—proof, she had help. Notes hidden for 50 years.

B. **We don’t believe in Verbal Dictation.** Thought Inspiration, God gave her visions, big ideas—but the words were her own. I had to slide from due north, 10, down to 7-8. She was a Mix Divine, human. The Bible is not a diary. Stories in different order. Gospel writers writing it down 40 years later, trying to reach different people. Don’t make the Bible and EGW what they aren’t.

C. EGW had been clear on it all the time—intro. to GC, and in 1SM: **“There is not always perfect order or apparent unity in the Scriptures.”** 1SM 20 **“The Bible is not given to us in grand superhuman language. Jesus, in order to reach man where he is, took humanity. The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect... It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men.... Inspiration acts not on the man’s words...but on the man himself, who, under the...Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts.”** 1SM 20-21

D. God gave her the big ideas, the grand central themes, visions. Words, her own. Got historical details from books. Yes, had editors. Yes, listened to people around her. Never meant for her books to be used as the authority to settle everything, 6000 years for Creation. Can’t base your beliefs on one sentence. Overall truth.

E. *****Can trust the Bible—for Salvation. GC vii “In His word God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation.”** 2 TIMOTHY 3:15—**“The Holy Scriptures, able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus.”**

III. NOW FOR THE HARD QUESTIONS—WHAT ABOUT PLAGIARISM? A. Almost from the very beginning people criticized her--ideas didn’t come from visions, came from books and other people. But it hit the hardest in the 1970s, articles in Spectrum, columns, EGW, and other books. Then **Walter** Rea, pastor in Long Beach, wrote **THE WHITE LIE**, said 80% came from books—without giving credit. They hired **Dr. FRED VELTMAN**, friend of mine, teacher at PUC. He and others took 15 chapters from *Desire of Ages*, compared to many of the books in her library. Decided **31% was from somewhere. DID SHE COPY FROM OTHER BOOKS? YES. DID SHE HAVE OTHER BOOKS OPEN IN FRONT OF HER WHILE SHE WAS WRITING? YES.** Even some of her most famous lines—**The greatest want of the world is for men...almost word for word from someone else. SHOULD SHE HAVE GIVEN CREDIT BETTER? YES.** Laws were different back then. Later she asked people to go back, give credit.

B. **What was REVOLUTIONARY was not the words, but the ideas, the truth, the big ideas.** What she did with these books, what she took, what she left out, what she added. She put them together.

C. **SO WHY DID SHE SAY, ONLY DEPENDENT ON THE HOLY SPIRIT? #1—She did read widely, and some of that just naturally slipped in. 1400 books in her library. #2—When she wrote it, she felt that the original truth was from God, not that person. All truth was from God, God was the**

authority, not them. #3—She had only 3rd grade education, didn't trust her own words, big ideas were from God, words she got wherever she could get them. #4—She was not writing doctoral dissertation. Writing books, sermons to win souls, can't bog down with footnotes.

D. For many of us, changed picture of inspiration—not sitting, getting a vision, writing it down. Also reading, diaries, letters, articles, put in scrapbooks, write one book, revise it, new book, maybe 7 layers before becomes Desire of Ages at end of her life. When does it become inspired? *****DOESN'T MATTER TO ME. BOTTOM LINE IS WHEN I READ IT, I HEAR THE VOICE OF GOD. GET CLOSER TO GOD.**

IV. GUIDELINES. A. **Not Inerrant.** We tried to make her a saint, idolize her, idealize her, use every word as ultimate truth. She said--“**I do not claim infallibility, or even perfection of Christian character. I am not free from mistakes and errors in my life.**” She struggled for 30 years to stop eating meat, after her own vision and telling everybody else what to do. Human. She raised children, she got tired, she got mad at her husband, church leaders. Human. **BOUDREAU**—Young pastor, 26 years old, got married, first honeymoon night still at the house, EGW there. Found him outside the bedroom, pacing back and forth. Realized, scared to go in—“Daniel, inside that room is a frightened young woman in bed petrified with fear. You go in to her right now, and you treat her lovingly, it will do her good—and Daniel, it will do you good, too!” Not prude! Human!

B. **Read the Context. MH 299—don't mix fruits and vegetables. Context—If the digestion is feeble.” Study the Historical Context, background, take time and place into consideration. Don't buy bicycles—cost what cars cost today. Don't waste money. Find the Underlying Principle.** Don't take baths—not talking about showers—tub baths, melting snow, whole family. Don't waste the Sabbath.

C. **Read All.** Get the total balance. **Eggs—2T 400 “Eggs should not be placed on your table.” CD 204 (1901)—“Get eggs...I say that milk and eggs should be included in your diet.”** Depended if you knew the source of the milk and eggs. **Kneeling for prayer**—my little churches in southern Oregon, small group read the quote, 2SM 312—when bowing before Sovereign God of the universe, should always kneel. So they started kneeling for every prayer, one Sabbath, 9 kneeling prayers, people mad. I'm 25 years old, I didn't know. Went to find Arthur White, no, in new book, 3SM, just the main prayer in church.

D. **Common Sense. 1872—3T 72 “Parents should be the only teachers of their children until they have reached eight or ten years of age.”** 1902, living in St. Helena. Hospital there, women needed as nurses. Better start a school. Others—no—Mrs. White said... Someone said, she's here, School on her property—ask her. When wrote that, didn't have our own schools, no Bible, not Christian teachers, no windows, just pot-bellied stove—terrible, don't put kids in until 10. Now we have our own schools, teachers, Bible, windows—put them in school. **“God wants us all to have common sense.” Think. Problem is, prophet been dead 100 years, can't call her up, so have to try to get the principle, then apply it 100 years later.**

V. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT. A. Big issue, last 35 years—studies comparing old EGW with young EGW showing development. Very controversial. How could a prophet, being given visions from God—grow? Series of articles—**Alden Thompson in the Review--“From Sinai to Golgotha”**—2 mountains--From Moses to Jesus. fear, thunder, smoke—to Grace and love. Then showed the same was in EGW. EW, Testimonies—then compare with what she wrote later in life—Steps to Christ, Desire of Ages, Mount of Blessing, Christ's Object Lessons. You can show the same story, or the same vision—writes it down one way, then, 30 years later, different. She grew. **Bombshell article, Review wouldn't print it, had to print it at Walla Walla. How can a prophet grow.** But that's what the Bible says—**HEBREWS 1:1-3 “In the olden days God spoke through the prophets, but in these last days God has spoken through His Son, the exact representation of His Being.”** Prophets were from God, but Jesus was more clear. Prophets were human. So there are degrees of truth. Prophets can grow.

B. EGW said, **“I have been constantly learning for 60 years.”** You don't think I could be with Jesus for 60 years and it wouldn't make a difference? When she was young, scared to death of God. Afraid, if she didn't give out all these testimonies, God would take her son away from her. Write, if you follow the clothes of the world, God take you off His list of children. Can read Prodigal Son story when she was young, when she

was old—added whole paragraph God like the Father. When she was young, Jesus between us and God, protecting us from the Father’s wrath. When old, Jesus standing between us and sin. Prophet growing.

C. So read the best Ellen White, the Ellen White after 60 years of being with Christ, after 1888. Steps to Christ, 1892. Desire of Ages, 1898. COL 1900. COL 415 “The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love.”

APPEAL: A. Somebody asked me—Would I baptize somebody who didn’t believe in Ellen White? Does she have to be part of the core, in the Keep, with God and Jesus and grace and heaven and the second coming and the Sabbath? Maybe not. But I will just say this as loudly and clearly as I can—I am proud to believe in Ellen White. Even if she copied some things. Even if got a few dates wrong. She knew Jesus. My friend Dwight Nelson found Jesus—through Steps to Christ. My uncle Morris Venden—got most of it all from Steps to Christ. In my 30s, went to a pastor’s meeting, Graham Maxwell gave us a whole package of Ellen White quotes about the character of God. Got so excited, went back to Hilda’s apartment, we were dating, look at this—She said, That’s what I’ve been trying to tell you for the last year and a half. I got so excited. Once I got it, I found it everywhere in her. I feel in love with her all over again. This lady knew Jesus. She had 2000 visions, she traveled all over the world, in snowstorms, oceans, trains all week to go across the country. Starts colleges and hospitals and churches all over the world. Did thousands of Christian things for poor people.

B. Just say-- And so—if somewhere along the line you have gotten sideways with Ellen White. Someone made you read, or someone misused her—I’m so sorry—but don’t throw her out. **Give her one more chance.** But read her at her best. Read her at the end of her life, after 70 years of being with Christ.

C. I will just say—I am proud to believe in Ellen White. Not one of my basic beliefs comes from her. But I get the best picture of God—from her. She makes me closer to Jesus. I’m a better person when I read her. My life is richer with her in my life. Reading her makes me want to do more for God. She lights my fire to lift up the character of God. **Give her one more chance.**