

FULL REPORT OF THE

LIFE OF CHRIST RESEARCH PROJECT

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PREFACE

Today is Memorial Day. Flags are waving, parades are marching and the brave and the bold who gave their lives for freedom and for their country are being honored in cemeteries across the nation. It is a day to pause, to turn our attention from the present and from the future to the past, to those who gave their last full measure of devotion to a cause, to a duty, they held dear. And during these few moments we stand silently by their resting places, placing floral tributes at their memorial stones. We call their names and faces before our minds and honor them. They are heroes, all of them, by virtue of their living and their dying.

As I sit in my office this morning writing this preface, my mind goes back to 1980 when this project was initiated and when so many Adventists, particularly here in the United States, were raising questions over Ellen White's use of sources. Some Adventist workers lost their jobs over this problem. And more than a few, not able to harmonize the facts coming to light with their Adventist faith, left the church. There were those who solved the issue by dismissing the special claims on Ellen White's prophetic ministry as pious relics of a naive stage of Adventism. Others took a different tack. They dismissed the problem itself as unimportant, irrelevant, or as unfounded.

But there were also those in the church who knew that the questions about Ellen White's use of sources were not fabrications of critics and dissidents. These issues were legitimate concerns that had been raised before, briefly

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treated, and laid aside, only to make their appearance again a few years later.

It was also known that students of Scripture have had to deal with similar questions addressed to the text of the Bible. No longer did it seem best for the future of Adventism, or even possible for that matter, to remain blind or uninformed in respect to the text of Scripture or that of Ellen G. White. It was therefore out of a deep regard for all the previous and present serious students of the Bible and of the writings of Ellen White that I accepted the challenge of making a serious study of Ellen White's use of sources in writing on the life of Christ.

In a few days the report on this research project will be sent to Elder Neal Wilson, President of the General Conference. The research and the study document of some 2,000 pages have occupied nearly eight years of my life, nearly five years on a full-time basis. Soon the research report will be duplicated and made available for study in the libraries of Adventist colleges and universities. The Ellen G. White Estate Research Centers will also have a copy and I have been told that individuals will be able to purchase personal copies if they desire. The report will not be edited and circulated by an Adventist publishing house.

On this Memorial Day, as I write the final sentences to this lengthy report, I find myself asking these questions. Was the study worth the cost - the cost to the church, the cost to my family, the cost to my life and career? Will it

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answer the questions of those in the church who were concerned over Ellen White's use of sources? Will it disturb those in the church who were not interested in the question or who had their own answers to the problem? Will faith be strengthened? Will knowledge be meaningfully advanced in an area in which others have also worked and published?

These, however, are only some of the thoughts which come to mind on this special Monday morning. In my heart today there is also a deep sense of gratitude to those without whose help this research project would never have been completed. There is no way I could place the final period to this report without recognizing their very important role in this work. But before acknowledging my great debt to these supporters of the study let me deal with a few mundane matters relating to this research document.

What you hold in your hands is basically a first draft. The writing began with chapter three before the research had been done on all 15 chapters. For this reason the pagination begins with chapter three. Once the entire research was completed and written up the concluding chapter was written. Only then, having completed the research and the analysis, was I prepared to write the introductory chapters which explain the background to the study, the research methodology, the organization of the report document, and the history of the writings of Ellen White leading up to the publishing of The Desire of Ages, the major focus of the research. Because of the constraints of time and money I was not able to rewrite

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the report from the vantage point of a completed research project. I have made typographical and statistical corrections and modified the syntax where my complex sentence structure defied all attempts by readers to understand what I had written. Allowing the report to stand, however, basically as first written, meant that the pages of the two introductory chapters would have to be numbered outside the sequential order begun with chapter three. I trust this double numbering will not confuse the reader.

The Ellen G. White Estate has now released all Ellen White manuscripts and letters included in the research document. No doubt those materials of Ellen White not previously placed in circulation will have been published by the time this report is distributed. We have tried our best to reproduce accurately all texts presented in the report. Any errors in our quotation of documents from the Ellen G. White Estate or other publications are my responsibility and not that of the White Estate or its officers.

There are many unnamed here who have contributed to this project through the questions raised and suggestions offered during the many public presentations I have given over the past eight years in church services, classroom discussions, meetings of Adventist Forum chapters, and in the more private contacts in the homes of Adventist members. Others have offered information and encouragement through their personal letters and telephone calls. To all these friends and interested fellow believers I owe a debt of gratitude.

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When one attempts to express appreciation to specifically named individuals, one runs the risk of leaving out someone through oversight. Nevertheless, despite that likely possibility with its attendant embarrassment, I must mention those on whom I have leaned heavily over the last seven-plus years. First of all there is Elder Neal C. Wilson, President of the General Conference, who has stood by the project and me personally throughout the long period of research and writing. Through his efforts and influence the two-year project was extended to three years and twice since then the research has been funded for a year on a half-time basis. I am sure that no one had in mind a study of this magnitude when the research was first planned. Had it not been for the support of Elder Wilson and his associates at the General Conference the study would have taken much longer to complete.

I should also add here that General Conference Officers, at the suggestion of Elder Wilson, were willing to appoint a committee under the chairmanship of Charles R. Taylor, to review the research report at the time we had completed the analysis of the 15 chapters. The members of this committee made several very useful suggestions, particularly those who were selected to critique specific chapters: George W. Rice, William H. Shea, Alden Thompson, Mervyn A. Warren, Francis W. Wernick, and Kenneth H. Wood.

Much credit for the success of this research is also due the previous and present administrators of Pacific Union College. Jack Cassell, President, and Gordon Madgwick, Vice

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President for Academic Administration, were willing to run the risk some eight years ago of supporting a research project about which many in the church had grave misgivings. They arranged for other teachers to take my classes, found someone else to chair the department of religion, and provided facilities on campus where the project could be housed. Malcolm Maxwell and Charles Bell, the current President and Academic Vice President of Pacific Union College, have maintained that support throughout the past five years despite the continuing concern on the part of some as to the wisdom of fostering this type of research. These college administrators, in a period of declining enrollments, nevertheless were willing to commit time, effort, and substantial financial support on behalf of a research project, which, while sponsored by the General Conference, was also seriously under question in the field. I deeply appreciate their confidence in me and their commitment to the search for truth which should characterize all Adventist educational institutions.

I owe the officers and employees of the Ellen. G. White Estate during the past seven years a very special note of appreciation. Some of these individuals no longer serve in the White Estate but their assistance will never be forgotten. Whether the request for assistance was made in connection with a personal visit or over the telephone, no call for help went unanswered and all assistance was offered willingly and cheerfully. Robert Olson, Secretary of the White Estate, went

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out of his way on many occasions to offer his services. Space does not permit me to elaborate on the many ways in which the staff provided aid and encouragement, but Arthur L. White, Kenneth Wood, Ronald Graybill, Don Mansell, Paul Gordon, Roger Coon, John Hancock, Dorothy Christman, Norma Collins, Ellen Mattison, D. A. Delafield, and Garnett Strickland made my work a labor of joy. Alta Robinson spent hours copying documents from my never-ending list and Timothy Poirier as late as last week was searching the files for a letter I requested. Even the directors of the regional research centers, Hedy Jemison at Andrews University and James Nix at Loma Linda University, spared no effort to come to my assistance.

Ronald Graybill, at the time an officer in the White Estate, and Warren H. Johns, then a member of the staff of Ministry magazine, shared with me the results of their own research into Ellen White's use of sources and provided a basic working bibliography for this research from the inventory they were developing of the books which were in Ellen White's libraries at the time of her death.

A brief word of acknowledgment here is far from adequate when it comes to recognizing the volunteers who spent hours reading the sources and comparing them with one or two chapters from The Desire of Ages. The faithfulness of Don Casebolt, Edna Grove, Delmer Johnson, Marilyn Cotton, Genevieve Ost, Ruth Wheeler, Jean Murphy, and Joel Lutes in locating and carefully reporting the source parallels was of

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inestimable value to the three of us working in the office here in Angwin.

Several individuals are mentioned in the study document in connection with their own publications. But they merit mention here as well. I am especially grateful to Walter Rea for opening his home to me for several days and allowing me to take notes from his research materials which later came to light in the publication of his book, The White Lie (Turlock, California: M & R Publications, 1982). Though I approached my research differently and did not agree with his interpretation of the data, much of what I found agreed with his evidence. The same kind of assistance was provided by Norman Jarnes of Verdict Publications. He allowed me to borrow some of the documentation used by Robert Brinsmead in writing several chapters in Judged by the Gospel (Fallbrook, California: Verdict Publications, 1980) having to do with Ellen White's method of writing. The use of their materials saved us many hours of searching for literary parallels and for this kindness on their part I am very thankful.

The library of the San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, California, provided most of the 19th century lives of Christ, devotional works, and sermon materials surveyed in this study. Additional volumes were obtained through the member libraries of the Graduate Theological Union of Berkeley, California, and through the services of our own inter-library loan personnel, Lois Normington and Gary Shearer. Other faculty and staff members of Pacific Union

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College who offered assistance were Keith Anderson and Richard Rockwell who helped with the random selection of the 15 chapters, Jeannie Crandall who assisted in the search of early Adventist literature, Willian Van Grit who provided English translations of selections from Ellen White's French edition of the life of Christ, and Larry Richards who early in the study worked with Samuel Andrews' chronology and harmony of the Gospels and more recently offered some very useful editorial suggestions.

Finally, apart from the members of my family, there are four persons who merit the highest praise for their patience, their competence, and their dedication on behalf of this project. I still have to stop and wonder at times how it came to pass that these four individuals were both willing and able to work on the project just when they were needed. Barbara (Belleau) Williams, a teacher of secretarial science and office administration, was looking for a part-time job when I took over the project in the fall of 1980. Her special skills were needed when the major tasks involved correspondence and organization. She helped me lay the foundation for the research.

Once the volunteers were selected and the research tasks were assigned Barbara left and Marcella Anderson applied for the half-time position as research assistant. Marcella had been working as a volunteer for nearly a year. She brought to the project a thorough knowledge of the Ellen G. White writings, a passion for hard work and a dedication to detail.

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Throughout the remaining years of the project, Marcella has adjusted the demands of her personal life to the requirements of the project, volunteering many hours in addition to those she was hired to fulfill. Her untiring efforts have made possible the success of this research project. There is no way my remarks can communicate the depth of my gratitude to Marcella Anderson.

Just at the height of the research, when I was busy selecting the Ellen White documents through frequent trips to Washington and beginning the analysis and the writing, we needed another part-time helper in the office. Once again one of our volunteers, a retired English professor, joined our staff. Paul Stauffer had become interested in the literary aspects of the study through his work as a volunteer and he provided the professional assistance we needed in developing the literary criteria for comparative analysis, transcribing the handwritten documents from Ellen White's journals and providing editorial suggestions for the research report. When the General Conference terminated its financial support Paul offered his assistance on a volunteer basis when needed. I am indeed deeply indebted to Paul Stauffer for his guidance, suggestions, and personal help throughout the last six years.

The fourth person who merits special mention in this list of personal assistants is Alice Holst. Alice is a retired secretarial science teacher who with Geneva Durham served as volunteers in searching for literary parallels and providing several kinds of research assistance. What is remarkable

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about the contribution of Alice Holst is her volunteering to read the entire research document and note errors, grave syntax problems, to suggest where explanatory remarks were necessary, and simply to provide the kind of careful editorial work a document of this nature with all of its detailed information required. She did not undertake the task of improving my writing style, though I am sure she recognized the need. She simply tackled the thankless job of checking references, making sure the document was accurate in its presentations, and that the text made sense when you read it. How do you express your appreciation for that kind of careful work on a report as long as this one is and for providing all this labor at no cost!

These four individuals who have worked the closest with me and have put in the most labor deserve much of the credit for the completion of this research project and its report. There is no way that a research of this magnitude can be the work of one individual. At the same time, however, it must be clearly understood that responsibility for the research design, the evaluations, and for the writing of the research report with its interpretation of the evidence and the conclusions is mine to bear. This independence applies to the sponsors as well. Even though the General Conference commissioned the study, I was given freedom to direct the research and to draw my own conclusions. The viewpoints expressed throughout the document are my own and not necessarily those of the Adventist church or its officers.

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The one person who truly rejoices today is my wife. Renie has spent much time alone over the past eight years, listened to many talks on the topic, sat quietly when conversations at home or during visits to other homes inevitably turned to the subject of this research, and gave up countless weekends and holidays to this project. Her patience with me and her willingness to endure the extra demands this research placed on our marriage and family life is beyond measure. To Renie, therefore, I am most grateful and hopefully the church is also.

It is now evening on this Memorial Day. As the roll of the snare drums fades into a low rumble and the bugle notes of "Taps" faintly echo across the distant hills, thousands quietly retreat from the silent groves and graves to take up their regular activities once again. Perhaps it is only fitting as I end this preface and shut down the faithful computer and its word processor that I dedicate my labors over the years on this research to those loyal and faithful Adventists who not only have been willing to face the evidence and question their assumptions but also to question their own questions, whatever the cost.

Fred Veltman
Pacific Union College
Angwin, California
May 30, 1988

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