



A.L.F. Library

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"Thought For the Month"

Moving the operation of the Adventist Laymen's Foundation from Mississippi to Arkansas in the 1970s presented some challenges. The closest library was fifteen miles from our campus at what is now the University of the Ozarks. This school had been affiliated with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and thus many of its books were theologically orientated. Another happenstance was the fact that the librarian's mother's maiden name was Grotheer. We had to be cousins!

The home we first built in 1976 is now the Foundation library. It contains B. T. Anderson's library, which had his father's collection (His father was the first Adventist missionary to Finland); the C. E. Holmes collection, as well as his own personal accumulation of books and papers. To this I have joined my own library.

One of the two bedrooms of the old home is now my study, in which are the biblical linguistic books; the Writings, and other key books of the Adventist "travail" of the last half of the past century. On a shelf near the desk are five two inch, 8 by 10 metal hinged, cloth bound note books which contain my Sabbath sermon outlines. I believed that if the Holy Spirit guided my mind in the thoughts developed for a particular Sabbath presentation, He would recall the same thoughts for another Sabbath when there was a need again. One sermon was always used over again. It was the first sermon I would preach as I began my new assignment. From it, I wish to draw the "thought for the month." The "text" I took from the Writings:

We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us (Testimonies to Ministers, p. 31). In another location of the Writings an additional thought is added - "and His teachings in our past history" (*Life Sketches*, p. 196).

I was aware that in our college class in homeletics we were cautioned not to use the Writings as "Scripture," much less as a text for a sermon; however, the reference served as an introductory message well and let the congregation know where I stood in regard to Ellen G. White. The first "way" emphasized that conviction, for the first biblical "text" I used was Hosea 12:13 - "*By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.*" Over the years as I have used this reference, which points up how the Lord led and leads - "by a prophet" - there is another text which tells of the human reaction to that Divine guidance. It reads:

And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord that He had done for Israel (Joshua 24:31; Judges 2:7).

The record continues:

And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord died. ... and also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers; and there rose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel (2:10).

Within a generation Israel so completely apostatized that they were unable to stand before their enemies. The Lord raised up Judges, and through them gave deliverance. Decade after decade the pattern continued: apostasy, captivity, a new judge, deliverance, and the cycle began again.

In 1915, the “messenger to the Remnant” died. In 1919, just four years later, a Bible Conference was held in Takoma Park which discussed the place and authority of Ellen G. White in Adventism. Men were judged by how they related to her writings.

Last year, Graeme Bradford, a retired professor of Bible at Avondale College in Australia copyrighted his manuscript, *More Than a Prophet* in which he discusses “how we lost and found again the real Ellen G. White.” The Foreword is written by Dr. Samuel Bacchiocchi, who also publishes the book through his own publications’ venture - “Biblical Perspectives.” It is less expensive through the Pacific Press.

Bacchiocchi quotes in his foreword Bradford’s own conviction in regard to Ellen G. White: - “Let me say from the outset, I write this book as one having great confidence in the prophetic gift as it has been used in the ministry of Ellen White. After reading and studying the evidence for and against her work, I emerge as a strong believer” (pp. 9, 15).

The White Estate seems not to accept Bradford’s confession. They charge on their webpage that the “Foreword and advertising incorrectly state that the manuscript was evaluated favorably by the officers of the Ellen G. White Estate.” They declare that “in actuality, while recognizing elements on which we can agree, the White Estate staff has strong concerns regarding several viewpoints expressed in the book.” They then list three points of disagreement.

1. The book expresses the view that the prophets in the New Testament and beyond generally carry less authority than Old Testament prophets, and that the individual and/or congregation must separate the wheat from the chaff in the messages even of genuine prophets. Such a view confirms people in the human tendency to accept what they like in inspired writings and reject as “chaff” the things with which they disagree.

This is skating on thin ice. While it is true that the prophetic office in the Old Testament was more dominant, there were New Testament prophets. The emphasis in the New Testament was apostleship. “And He gave, some apostles; and some, prophets” (Eph. 4:11).

2. The book suggests that because Ellen White used sources in her writings relating to history, prophecy, health, or theology, the views she expressed may have originated more from her contemporaries than divine inspiration. Her depiction of end time events, for example, as found in *The Great Controversy*, is portrayed as deriving primarily from the expectations of 19th century North American Adventists, having little application to today’s global society.

3. While the White Estate staff recognizes that Ellen White was fallible and subject to human frailties - not unlike the biblical prophets - we maintain that certain positions taken in the book do not fairly reflect the understanding of Ellen White and her associates regarding her prophetic ministry, and fail to represent fully Ellen White’s prophetic contributions to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.