

Patriarchs and Profits

The Prophet Who Turned Plagiarism into Profit

By Dirk Anderson

Patriarchs and Profits

First Edition

By Dirk Anderson

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Preface

I was raised a Seventh-day Adventist, and for most of my life I believed exactly what I was told to believe. When I had questions, I took them to people whose paychecks depended on keeping people in the system. I did not think of it that way at the time. I thought of it as asking my pastor.

I did not leave the church because someone argued me out of it. I left because Dirk Anderson challenged me to prove him wrong from the source documents. I gave him all the stock answers I had been groomed to give:

- Failed prophecy? Must be conditional.
- Plagiarism? God told her what to copy.
- Mistakes? She said she wasn't infallible.
- Contradictions? You're taking her out-of-context.
- Everything else? Attacks against the Spirit of Prophecy were predicted in the last days to make it of none effect.

Anderson asked me one question: if Joseph Smith used these same excuses to explain away his failed predictions, plagiarized writings, and contradictions, would you accept him as a true prophet of God?

Every stock defense relies on unfalsifiability and a double standard. When an SDA evaluates a Mormon, a Jehovah's Witness, or a Catholic, they use a strict, literal, zero-tolerance standard:

- *Did Joseph Smith copy text?* "He's a fraud."
- *Did the Watchtower predict 1975 and it failed?* "They are false prophets."
- *Did the Papacy change a position and contradict the Bible?* "It's apostasy."

But the moment those exact same flaws are pointed out in Ellen White, we instantly change the standard. Anderson saw right through my double-standard.

I was forced to abandon those stock answers I had grown so fond of. When I turned and faced the evidence without my lame excuses to protect me, I saw the evidence in a whole new light. Before long, my illusion of Ellen White and Seventh-day Adventism crumbled into dust.

That is what I love about the book you are holding. It is evidence-based. This isn't for everyone. Some SDAs are comfortable living in under strong delusion. This book is not for you. When you are ready, the teacher will come.

This book is for those who believe they are called by God to follow the evidence rather than making excuses for it. You may not agree with all of Anderson's conclusions. But you cannot deny the evidence.

So, what about that challenge Anderson threw out? I took it and I'm man enough to admit I lost that one. And I'm glad I lost, because the truth won. And the truth set me free.

— Desmond Reid

Introduction

As a young, confused Seventh-day Adventist, I felt the urge to get closer to God. Someone suggested the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*. I knew the author. I had been instructed that she was God's prophet and her books were inspired like the Bible. I looked forward to the unusual insights she would reveal to me as I opened the pages. As dust gathered on my KJV Bible, I plowed through the lengthy book.

Then I reached the chapter on Jacob's night of wrestling, and I began to shudder. With grave concern I read on page 201 that during the Time of Trouble, "Jesus leaves His position as man's intercessor before God" and that "the people of God will be in peril from the wicked who are seeking to destroy them." On the following page I read that "none of our offenses are forgotten" by God. I began to imagine that God was constantly thinking about my past offenses.

I could not imagine living without an intercessor. Jesus was the only hope I had ever known. Yet here I saw a time when He would no longer intercede for His people, while Satan would be bringing their past sins before them and wicked men would be trying to destroy them.

What concerned me was not simply the thought of persecution. It was the thought that I might not be good enough when that day came. I knew that I must somehow reach a state of sinless perfection before Christ's intercessory work ended. The question that haunted me was: *Could I ever be perfect enough to satisfy God?*

Later, on page 574, I found the words, "as God is perfect in His sphere, so we are to be perfect in ours." That didn't comfort

me. It deepened the burden I was already carrying. I looked at my own life and saw everything that was wrong with me — every failure, every sinful thought, every weakness I could not seem to conquer. If sinless perfection was the price of standing before God without an intercessor, I knew I was in trouble.

I *thought* I was reading God's instructions. I believed Ellen White was God's prophet. I believed these words had come through her from heaven. Thus, if the book told me that I had to become perfect before Jesus could no longer plead my case, I believed it.

As a result, guilt and fear became my constant companions. I tried harder. Prayed harder. Studied harder. At first, I gave up meat, and then I went totally vegan. I was trying everything to achieve perfection but it seemed elusive.

Eventually something happened that changed everything. I met Dale Ratzlaff. He gave me his book *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*. I discovered that the theory of living without an intercessor is not taught in the Bible. I discovered the Bible teaches that the Atonement was not just *started* at the Cross but *completed* there. I began to see that salvation was not an uncertain reward waiting at the end of my successful performance. It was a gift I could experience now.

The difference was overwhelming. The Jesus I discovered in Scripture was not asking me to save myself by reaching for sinless perfection. He was calling me to trust that his grace was sufficient for me.

With that realization my life of guilt and condemnation turned into a life of freedom. The chains of legalism began to fall away. Looking back, I realized something else. The source of my confusion was a religious system that had placed another authority alongside Scripture and had taught me to interpret the Bible through the lens of Ellen White.

That realization changed the way I read Ellen White. I stopped asking, "*What new truth is God revealing through her?*" and began asking a much more important question: "*Is this actually true?*"

That question is the reason for this book.

This book investigates a claim of enormous consequence: *Was Ellen White speaking for God?* If her writings were the voice of God, then they deserve our trust and obedience. If, however, they were the product of human minds, then readers are in danger of being led astray.

If you are a believer in Ellen White and are afraid to turn the pages to the next chapter, may I remind you:

Truth loses nothing from investigation. Cults lose everything.

Let the investigation begin!

— Brother Anderson

1 ♦ An Inspired Book?

For generations, Seventh-day Adventists have read *Patriarchs and Prophets* as light from heaven — a divinely revealed account of the biblical past, filled with intriguing details supplied to prophetess Ellen White through visions.

This belief was fostered by Ellen White herself. In 1889, just before the release of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, she wrote:

I had been, during the forty-five years of experience, shown the lives, the character and history of the patriarchs, and prophets...¹

In 1906, she reaffirmed this supernatural claim:

When I am using my pen, wonderful representations are given me of past, present, and future.²

These and many similar statements led her followers to believe that the narrative in *Patriarchs and Prophets* was truth streaming directly from the portals of glory.

No Human Mind

Ellen White left no ambiguity about the source of *Patriarchs and Prophets*. She insisted it came from God, in language that leaves no room for a human collaborator:

God gave me the light contained in *Great Controversy* and *Patriarchs and Prophets*... It cannot be denied that **these works were not the product of any human mind; they are the voice of God speaking to His people.**³

That is about as strong a claim of divine authorship as language allows. **Not the product of any human mind.** She is **not** saying God inspired her thoughts and she put those into her own words. She is **not** saying God's ideas channelled through her and were then polished by book editors. No, it was the actual **voice of God** — verbal inspiration — addressed to His people, using her hand only as the instrument.

Uriah Smith made his own claim in his introduction to the book. He explained that its purpose was to bring "into stronger light some features that are but briefly mentioned in the Bible" and to reveal the "springs of action" behind the biblical narrative. The value of the book, in other words, was precisely what the Bible itself does not provide, and what an uninspired author could not possibly know: additional details, motives, explanations, and narrative material found nowhere in Genesis. Smith described this as a light "shed upon the Scripture" and concluded that the book "claims to be a manifestation of the gift of prophecy."⁴

That distinction is critical. If Ellen White were merely another nineteenth-century sectarian commentator promoting SDA views on the Old Testament, an investigation like this would be completely unnecessary. Sensible readers would have had a healthy skepticism when reading her writings. However, she claimed to be not only a prophet, but *more* than a prophet. Therefore, she must be held to the very highest standard of integrity.

White's entire claim to prophetic authority hinges on a single point: the extra-biblical payload she *added* to Holy Writ. Strip away everything Moses already wrote in Genesis, and what remains? The imagined motives, the theatrical dialogue, the invented scenes, and the extra-biblical lore. That extra material is the sum total of White's claim to divine revelation. If those additions can be shown to be human inventions, her entire prophetic charade collapses.

Perhaps James White unknowingly described it the best:

If Mrs. White has gathered the facts from a human mind in a single case she has in thousands of cases, and God

has not shown her these things which she has written in these personal testimonies.⁵

The Whites, who had much to profit from the sale of her books, continued to insist that Ellen was inspired by God. The claim that White was writing what God showed her in vision was reinforced by W. C. White, her son, literary manager, and counselor, who wrote:

Regarding Mother's writings, I have overwhelming evidence and conviction that they are the description and delineation of what God has revealed to her in vision.⁶

Decades later, her grandson Arthur White described her role in the same terms, comparing her directly to Moses: "just as Moses watched history in advance so did Ellen White in vision watch history develop, both past and future."⁷

Mother, son, and grandson all sang from the exact same hymnal: what appeared on the page had supposedly been shown to her in heavenly vision.

The Evolution of Inspiration

In 1864, White published her first raw attempt at Old Testament narrative in *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 3 — a modest work written strictly for the edification of her sectarian followers.

Twenty-six years later, she released *Patriarchs and Prophets* — a volume targeted at the mainstream public, bloated to nearly double its original length and packed with intricate new details. Hundreds of new pages separated the two accounts. Where did this sudden explosion of "history" come from?

For over a century, the White Estate has repeated the exact same party line: the extra material descended directly from heaven. "Many repeated visions opened before the author more detailed information," the Trustees alleged, insisting the massive additions were "presented to Mrs. White in many revelations."⁸

Strip away the pious spin, and the White Estate's defense is staggering: it requires us to believe Almighty God supplied

heavenly visions for the sole purpose of fattening up a thin sectarian booklet into a high-margin commercial product that could be sold to thousands. How convenient that the Lord flooded her mind with "new revelations" at the exact moment the SDA publishing empire needed a thick, expensive subscription book to sell to the general public. Divine revelation, it turns out, was perfectly attuned with commercial opportunity.

Mass Book Sales

It all started with George King, a young Canadian SDA who immigrated to Battle Creek, Michigan, in early 1879. Wanting to be a preacher but lacking public-speaking talent, James White encouraged King to conduct house-to-house visitations instead. In doing so, King helped prove the potential of selling SDA books directly to the public.

In 1880, King had significant success in canvassing Dr. J.H. Kellogg's *Home Hand Book of Domestic Hygiene and Rational Medicine*, a book designed to appeal broadly to the public. As book sales began climbing into the tens of thousands, Ellen White and SDA corporate leaders took notice. Seizing the opportunity, Ellen White wrote an article in the *Review* calling for "canvassers and colporteurs" of both sexes to engage in the work and encouraged "every member" of the sect to be "deeply interested in sending forth publications." She concluded: "Let the leaflets and tracts, the papers and books, go in every direction."⁹

In October of 1880, she wrote to her son Willie letting him know that they had every intention of getting plugged into this money machine:

We are now deciding to spend this winter and next summer in preparing books. ... Volume Four [of *Spirit of Prophecy*]... *Life of Christ*, both books [*Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume 2 (1877) and Volume 3 (1878)], the most sharp and interesting matter in one large book for canvassers to use for public sale. ... Our time now must

be in production of books before we get unable to use the pen. Write at once.¹⁰

In 1881, as the Whites rushed to build an editorial staff that could generate new books for public consumption, King persuaded the Review and Herald publishing house to issue Uriah Smith's *Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation* as a single, attractive volume designed for door-to-door sales. His immediate commercial success helped convince leaders that literature evangelism could be highly profitable.

By the early 1880s, the canvassing effort was picking up steam. The sect found it could market its doctrines to the general public while generating substantial revenue. During the 1880s, the sect recruited dedicated canvassing agents and established training institutes. By 1884, some canvassers were apparently making a reasonable income because Mrs. White wrote privately to Willie:

If you can get out the books so that they can be had at the camp meetings, I would engage to sell all I could myself, and these large sums paid to canvassers, I could have myself.¹¹

White understood the lucrative nature of this business and wanted her piece of it. She envisioned replacing her aging *Spirit of Prophecy* series and creating the *Conflict of the Ages* series — a set of five large books designed for public consumption — and big profits. The first release of this new series would be called *Great Controversy* (1888) to be followed up with *Patriarchs and Prophets* — the replacement for volume one of *Spirit of Prophecy*.

This would require major revision work. Her earlier works were ill-suited for a non-SDA audience for three reasons.

First, contentious passages — such as her controversial statements regarding the **amalgamation of man and beast** — had to be purged.

Secondly, the existing material was far too brief for a subscription volume. When *Patriarchs and Prophets* was finally released in 1890, it had expanded to a whopping 764 pages.

Finally, the literary quality required significant elevation. To compete with popular Christian authors of the era, a team of literary assistants and editors was assembled to polish, embellish, and expand White's earlier works into commercial products that the public would be willing to purchase.

Thus, an organized publishing apparatus was established to take White's earlier writings, refine them, and market them on a worldwide scale. In doing so, Ellen White operated unlike any biblical prophet before her:

- No biblical prophet built a commercial publishing empire.
- No biblical prophet sold their revelations and collected royalties on them.
- No biblical prophet revised their visions to enhance market appeal.
- No biblical prophet employed editorial teams to sanitize and embellish their writings.
- No biblical prophet systematically plagiarized the literary works of contemporaries into their own revelations while claiming not to do so.

Was God behind all of this?

¹ Ellen White, Letter 14, 1889. May 12, 1889 to "Children of the Household."

² Ellen White, Letter 86, 1906.

³ Ellen G. White, Manuscript 23, 1890. See also Manuscript 1, 1905: "These books [Great Controversy and Patriarchs and Prophets] were written under the influence and in accordance with the instruction of God."

⁴ Uriah Smith, Introduction to *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Pacific Press, 1890), 19, 28. Smith is clearly hedging by describing the book's origin as "what claims to be a manifestation of the gift of prophecy" rather than explicitly declaring it to be one. He wrote this shortly after the tumultuous 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session. Smith was among the prominent leaders who had clashed with Ellen White over the law in Galatians. Given his recent personal friction with White's authority, Smith may have chosen language that would not be viewed as writing a blank check for her inspiration.

⁵ James White, *Life Sketches* (1880), 328.

⁶ W. C. White to W. W. Eastman, Nov. 4, 1912.

⁷ Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1973), 126.

⁸ Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications, preface to *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, ii; The Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications, *Early Writings* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1882), comments in the preface, v2, March, 1963). See also: The Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications, *Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1 (1949), 16:

The visions continued all through her life's experience. Early among these, in 1858, was the comprehensive basic vision of The Great Controversy. Within six months of the revelation, the matter was ready for the public in the form of the little book *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 1, "The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels and Satan and His Angels" (*Early Writings*, part 3). In many succeeding visions the great controversy account was opened up in greater detail, and Mrs. White rewrote it, first in the seventies and eighties in the four volumes of the *Spirit of Prophecy* and later in the volumes of the Conflict of the Ages Series—*Patriarchs and Prophets*...

⁹ Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, June 10, 1880.

¹⁰ Ellen White, Letter 43, 1880.

¹¹ Ellen White, Letter 53, 1884.

2 ♦ From Vision to Revision

Ellen White first published her views on early Old Testament history in 1864 in *Spiritual Gifts*.¹ In the preface of volume 3, she made an incredibly direct claim: **“the great facts of faith, connected with the history of holy men of old, have been opened to me in vision.”**²

That statement could not be any clearer. White was not giving her readers a commentary on biblical history. She was claiming that God had opened the biblical events to her through supernatural vision. She was writing down what she claimed to have seen in vision.

If the details she supplies in her books are genuinely the product of divine revelation, we should expect the following:

1. They do not contain information that could not have been obtained from ordinary human sources.
2. They should not need to be later altered because they were incorrect.
3. They should be consistent with Scripture and with established scientific facts.

The first two points will be tested in this chapter. Did her later additions to *Spiritual Gifts* merely expand the vision, or did they materially alter her earlier visionary material? Did those revisions come from "human minds" or God?

Evolving into the *Spirit of Prophecy*

Six years after *Spiritual Gifts* was released, the same material was repackaged and republished as *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 1.³ Notice the title change. Ellen White had gone from

possessing a “spiritual gift” of prophecy to having her writings associated with the much more exalted title, *The Spirit of Prophecy*. She was no longer merely the prophetess through whom the Spirit spoke; she became identified with the very title used to describe the prophetic authority itself.

Meanwhile, the repackaging provided an opportunity to correct glaring errors in the earlier volume, including the placement of the Tower of Babel *before* the Genesis Flood.⁴ Material from *Spiritual Gifts* volumes 1, 3, and 4a was combined to build *Spirit of Prophecy* volume one which covered the fall of Satan, Creation, and Old Testament history through the time of Solomon. Aside from these structural changes and fixing minor imperfections, the text remained remarkably similar, spanning roughly 414 pages drawn from 424 pages of *Spiritual Gifts*.

Revising the Visions

Twenty years after *Spirit of Prophecy* was released, a much lengthier book — *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1990) — hit the market. The White Estate has long explained to the public why *Patriarchs and Prophets* is so much larger than its predecessors. The additional material, they say, did not come from research or expanding her sources. It came because “**many repeated visions** opened before the author more detailed information,” details that were “**presented to Mrs. White in many revelations.**”⁵

That explanation is easy to test. If the twenty-six years between the two books were filled with new revelations from heaven, the new material should not be traceable to books that appeared on her shelves during those same twenty-six years.

Lay the two editions side by side. Identify what was added. Then ask a simple question: *Where did those additions come from?*

The answer is not more visions. The answer is more books! Below is the evidence.

1. The Sword That Left Their Hands

Genesis 3:24 says only that God placed "cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way" at the entrance to Eden. It does not explicitly say the cherubim held the sword. In 1864, however, Ellen White had no doubt:

Spiritual Gifts, vol. 3 (1864) ⁶	Patriarchs and Prophets (1890) ⁷
"Holy angels were sent to drive out the disobedient pair from the garden, while other angels guarded the way to the tree of life. Each one of these mighty angels had in his right hand a glittering sword."	"holy angels were immediately commissioned to guard the tree of life. Around these angels flashed beams of light having the appearance of a glittering sword."

In her 1864 account, every angel carries a sword in his right hand. Twenty-six years later, the swords have disappeared. The angels remain, but the sword has become flashing light surrounding them. What changed her mind?

In 1865, John Cumming published an observation that directly challenged White's earlier description:

The flaming sword was perfectly distinct from the cherubim. The cherubim did not wield a flaming sword in their hands, 'he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way upon itself,' as it should be rendered.⁸

Three years later Thomas J. Conant reached much the same conclusion, describing the flaming sword not as a weapon but as a visible manifestation of Jehovah's glory:

Here, in connection with the flaming sword, they represent the majesty and authority of Jehovah, in some visible manifestation, as in the terrors of the lightning-cloud.⁹

Both of their books were in White's library. Notice the progression:

- **1864** — White: every angel holds a glittering sword.

- **1865** — Cumming: the cherubim *did not* hold the sword.
- **1868** — Conant: the sword represents a visible manifestation like lightning.
- **1890** — White: angels no longer hold the sword; it is now flashing light surrounding the angels.

Nothing in Genesis changed between 1864 and 1890. What changed was the library on Ellen White's shelves. First Cumming removed the sword from the angels' hands. Then Conant described it as a manifestation of light. By 1890, Ellen White's vision had evolved in the same direction.

Did God correct her mistake, or did her library?

2. The Seth Paragraph Grew with the Library

The Seth paragraph provides the clearest chronological test in the entire book. This paragraph grows as new books arrive in Ellen White's library. In 1864 she wrote:

Seth was a worthy character, and was to take the place of Abel in right doing. Yet he was a son of Adam like sinful Cain, and inherited from the nature of Adam no more natural goodness than did Cain.¹⁰

That is all she said in 1864. Only two brief sentences — a mere forty words.

By 1890, those two sentences had become a substantial paragraph. Much of the expansion can be traced to two sources. In the quotation below, the **highlighted text** parallels Alfred Edersheim's *Bible History* (1875); the **colored sentence** parallels an 1838 work translated by Colonel William Miles.

To Adam was given another son, to be the inheritor of the divine promise, the heir of the spiritual birthright. The name **Seth**, given to this son, **signified** “appointed,” or “compensation;” “for,” said the mother, “God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.” **Seth was of more noble stature than Cain or Abel, and resembled Adam more**

closely than did his other sons. He was a worthy character, following in the steps of Abel. Yet he inherited no more natural goodness than did Cain. Concerning the creation of Adam it is said, "In the likeness of God made He him;" but man, after the Fall, "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image." While Adam was created sinless, in the likeness of God, Seth, like Cain, inherited the fallen nature of his parents.¹¹

The explanation of Seth's name, Eve's quotation, the contrast between Genesis 5:1 and 5:3, and the statement that Seth inherited Adam's fallen nature all appear in Edersheim, published after *Spiritual Gifts* but before *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Edersheim's book was unavailable when she wrote the first version. He wrote in 1875:

Accordingly He gave to Adam and Eve another son, whom his mother significantly called 'Seth,' that is, 'appointed,' or rather 'compensation' 'for; God,' said she, 'hath appointed me... another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.'... whereas we read of Adam that 'in the likeness of God made He him,' it is now added that 'he begat a son in his own likeness, after his image.' Adam was created pure and sinless in the likeness of God; Seth inherited the fallen nature of his father.¹²

This explains most of Ellen White's expansion of Seth's story. However, the sentence describing Seth's stature and resemblance to Adam does not appear in Genesis, Edersheim, or any of the standard commentaries examined for this study. Yet a striking parallel appears in an 1838 genealogical book translated by Miles:

Seth was more like his father, both in form and temper, than any of his brethren; some say he was taller than the rest.¹³

The chronology is difficult to escape. In 1864 the Edersheim material is absent because Edersheim had not yet written it. By 1890, after his *Bible History* had appeared in White's library, the paragraph expands with Edersheim's language, structure, and arguments. One remaining sentence closely parallels an 1838 source but it is impossible to trace how or when White (or her editors) came across this material.

The White Estate attributes this expansion to "many repeated visions." The evidence points in another direction. As new books, articles, and clippings became available to White, new details appeared in her visions.

3. The Doubt That Was Not There in 1864

On Mount Moriah, did Abraham hesitate? In 1864, Ellen White answered that question directly, and the answer was a definitive no.

Abraham did not disbelieve God, and hesitate, but early in the morning he took two of his servants, and Isaac his son, and the wood for the burnt-offering, and went unto the place of which God had told him.¹⁴

In 1865, Cumming supplied a doubt, and a very specific one — that the command appeared to contradict God's own character:

Surely Abraham must have said, 'Is it possible that this can be God's voice? Does it not seem, if it be real, as if God contradicted Himself? Does it not look as if He had made a promise only to break it.'¹⁵

By 1890, Cumming's doubt arrived in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, transferred to Satan's mouth:

Satan was at hand to suggest that he must be deceived, for the divine law commands, 'Thou shalt not kill,' and God would not require what He had once forbidden.¹⁶

In 1864 there is no hesitation. In 1890 there is a temptation to believe the command was self-contradictory. That is not a fuller

view of the same scene. It is a **different account of what happened**, and it matches a book published in the interval.

4. The Direction of the Wording

This final observation is easy to miss, yet it may be the most revealing of all.

When writers copy from another source, their first draft is often closest to the original. As they revise, they substitute synonyms, rearrange phrases, and gradually make the plagiarism less obvious. One would therefore expect the earliest version to preserve the strongest verbal parallels, with later editions smoothing them away.

If, on the other hand, the additional material came through repeated visions, there is no obvious reason why the wording should begin by closely echoing nineteenth-century commentaries and then slowly drift away from them.

Compare the three passages:

Columbian Bible (1822)	Spiritual Gifts (1864)	Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 1 (1870)	Patriarchs and Prophets (1890)
Original: they would “enter into a new, and more noble kind of knowledge.” ¹⁷	Verbatim: “they would receive a new and more noble kind of knowledge than they had hitherto attained.” ¹⁸	Verbatim: “they would receive a new and more noble kind of knowledge than they had hitherto attained.” ¹⁹	Paraphrased: “they would attain to a more exalted sphere of existence and enter a broader field of knowledge.” ²⁰
Original: Simeon was “the principal actor.” ²¹	Verbatim: “he was the instigator, and principal actor.” ²²	Verbatim: “he was the instigator and principal actor.” ²³	Paraphrased: “the instigator and chief actor.” ²⁴
Original: “Joseph, modest... disclaims all honour of the interpretation... it is God alone can explain these mysteries.” ²⁵	Verbatim: “He modestly disclaims all honor... God alone can explain these mysteries.” ²⁶	Verbatim: “He modestly disclaims all honor... God alone can explain these mysteries.” ²⁷	Nearly Verbatim: “He modestly disclaims the honor... God alone can explain these mysteries.” ²⁸

The pattern is consistent. In every case, *Spiritual Gifts* (1864) stands closest to the earlier commentary. By 1890 the same ideas

remain, but the wording has been polished. "Principal actor" becomes "chief actor." "Disclaims all honor" becomes "disclaims the honor." "A new and more noble kind of knowledge" is rewritten into freer language while preserving the same thought.

That is what happens when an editor revises plagiarized material. The dependence becomes less conspicuous even though the underlying ideas remain constant.

What the Twenty-Six Years Actually Added

The additions touch nearly every corner of Genesis. Abraham suddenly acquires new motives, new virtues, and new conversations. Lot gains new emotions. Melchizedek's bread and wine receive a new explanation. Eliezer, Rebekah, Deborah, Esau, Potiphar, Joseph, Noah, and the builders of Babel all acquire details the Bible never records. New historical customs appear: the laws of caste, the birthright priesthood, daughters of princes tending flocks, "secondary wives," and the meaning of Mahanaim. Even the raven, the shoreless ocean, and Noah's final appeal before the Flood receive fresh embellishment.

The outstanding fact is that these embellishments are traceable to the nineteenth-century books that accumulated on Ellen White's shelves between 1864 and 1890. The White Estate claims the twenty-six years added repeated visions. The evidence suggests otherwise. Not convinced? The next fourteen chapters of this book analyze fourteen sources Ellen White used in the first twenty-one chapters of *Patriarchs and Prophets*. This evidence will demonstrate Ellen White relied heavily upon "human minds" in developing her book.

What 26 Years Removed

Because *Patriarchs and Prophets* was such a substantial expansion of Ellen White's earlier books, much of the focus of this book will be on what was added and why. However, another question that is just as important is: *what was removed, and why?*

In the introduction to *Spiritual Gifts*, Ellen White portrayed its historical material as what had been "opened to me in vision." Why, then, was some of that supposedly revealed material removed when the book was revised? The White Estate explains:

However, as the reading groups greatly broadened to include many who were not acquainted with the source of her information, the author, in keeping with her responsibility, omitted in these later works intended now for the general reader, a few points dealt with in the little volumes that were penned for the church alone. An instance of this is the statement that Adam as created was "more than twice as tall as men now living upon the earth." (Volume III, p. 34.)²⁹

Here is the reason supplied by the White Estate for removing a fact supposedly shown to Ellen White in vision, such as the height of Adam: it was "penned for the church alone." The explanation is not that the statement was wrong, mistaken, legendary, or nonsense. The problem was apparently that it was material intended *solely* for the sect's consumption. The general public was not ready for it.

Why not? Because readers unfamiliar with Ellen White's "call and work" might be prejudiced by such extraordinary details.³⁰ A claim that Adam was more than twice the height of modern men might raise an obvious question: *How did she know that?* So the detail was removed. That is the White Estate's explanation.

Adam's height will be examined in greater detail in chapter 18. For now, however, the explanation establishes an important principle. Details were removed because they might arouse suspicion in readers who were not already familiar with or accepting of Ellen White's prophetic claims. The book was being prepared for a much broader, non-SDA audience. If a passage made it too obvious that White was claiming to have witnessed an event or been given information unavailable to ordinary

human knowledge, it could prejudice the reader against the book.

That gives us a testable prediction. If the White Estate's explanation is correct, we should expect the removals to follow that pattern. We should find passages deleted because they made White's claim to supernatural knowledge too obvious.

The question remains: what if some passages were removed because they were simply *wrong*?

That is the question the evidence below will answer. Did White remove material merely because it was too revealing of her prophetic claims? Or did she also remove statements that could no longer be defended as true?

1. "Not By Angels"

In 1864, writing under the explicit claim that she was recording truths shown to her in vision, White made a sweeping assertion regarding the proclamation of the Ten Commandments:

The Lord then gave Moses express directions in regard to preparing the people for him to approach nigh to them that they might hear his law spoken, **not by angels, but by himself**.³¹

That phrase — "*not by angels*" — creates a serious theological problem. The New Testament repeatedly affirms that angels were directly involved in the giving of the Law at Sinai:

Acts 7:53: Who have received the law **by the disposition of angels**, and have not kept it.

- NIV: ...law that was given by angels...
- ESV: ...law as delivered by angels...

Galatians 3:19: Wherefore then serveth the law? ... it was **ordained by angels** in the hand of a mediator.

- NIV: The law was given through angels...

Hebrews 2:2: For if the word **spoken by angels** was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward..."

The Bible clearly states that God Himself spoke the law (Exodus 20:1; Deuteronomy 4:12,33; 5:4,22), but it also teaches that angels were involved in the delivery. It was never an "either-or" question. Scripture affirms the involvement of both. Ellen White, however, explicitly excludes the angels.

Someone apparently noticed this discrepancy, because when *Patriarchs and Prophets* appeared, the problematic exclusionary clause mysteriously disappeared:

Speaking out of the thick darkness that enshrouded Him, as He stood upon the mount, surrounded by a retinue of angels, the Lord made known His law.³²

The majestic scene remains. The retinue of angels remains. But the explicit claim excluding angels — the exact four words that contradicted the Bible — was quietly excised without comment.

This is qualitatively different from ordinary editorial trimming. It raises brutal, inescapable questions for anyone defending her prophetic authority. If the 1864 statement was revealed in vision, why change it? Did God forget how He delivered the Law at Sinai, or was Ellen G. White inventing details out of her own head?

The obvious answer is that White later concluded it contradicted the New Testament and quietly edited her "inspired" book to cover her tracks. The problem with that is it casts doubt upon her being on the scene in vision.

2. The Moses Court Drama

When evaluating claims of divine inspiration, a critical test is whether a self-proclaimed prophet receives authentic heavenly revelation or merely absorbs contemporary human folklore. In 1864, Ellen White published two dramatic, highly detailed narratives regarding Moses' life in the Egyptian royal court — neither of which exists anywhere in the Bible:

The priests and wise men of Egypt were brought into discussion with Moses, to prove that the God he worshipped was not superior to the gods of the Egyptians. Moses was able to meet all their arguments,

and completely confound them. The priests could not answer him, but were astonished at his wisdom, and feared his influence.³³

Two pages later, White added a specific political motive for why Pharaoh sought to execute Moses after he killed the Egyptian guard:

This was reported to Pharaoh, with exaggeration, that Moses designed to slay the king, and take the crown, and make himself king over Egypt.³⁴

The Book of Exodus makes no mention of court debates, defeated priests, or rumors of regicide and stolen crowns (Exodus 2:14–15). However, the distinctive elements of this storyline have a well-documented human pedigree: Flavius Josephus. In his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book II, Chapters 9–11, Josephus recorded the legendary Jewish tradition that young Moses trampled Pharaoh's crown, prompting Egyptian sacred scribes to demand his death (2.9.7). Josephus also reports that Pharaoh sought to execute Moses after Egyptian courtiers accused him of intending "sedition" (2.11.1). White had an 1857 copy of Josephus's *Antiquities* in her library.

Consider the sequence of events:

1. **Ancient Tradition:** Extra-biblical traditions about Moses as an Egyptian military leader, his conflicts with Egyptian priests, and intrigue surrounding Pharaoh's crown were circulating in Jewish literature before the time of Josephus.
2. **Josephus — *Antiquities of the Jews* (c. 93–94 CE):** Josephus preserved and elaborated these traditions for a Roman audience. His account contains the trampled-crown episode, the hostility of the Egyptian priests, and the accusation that Moses was plotting against the state.
3. **White's Vision (1864):** White incorporated stories similar to those found in Josephus into *Spiritual Gifts*, presenting them as historical events revealed to her in vision.

4. **Keil and Delitzsch:** While earlier commentators sometimes treated traditions from Josephus as historical, Keil and Delitzsch criticized such material as legendary, embellished, and "unhistorical." By the nineteenth century, biblical scholarship was increasingly treating these Jewish traditions as unreliable.³⁵
5. **White's Revision (1890):** When compiling *Patriarchs and Prophets*, White removed the dramatic court debate and the crown-seizure plot while retaining the surrounding biblical narrative.

The timing is difficult to ignore. The legendary material appears in White's 1864 account when Josephus was available to her in print. By the late nineteenth century, such traditions were increasingly being treated by biblical scholars as unreliable. Then, in 1890, the very details that went beyond Scripture disappeared from White's narrative.

The White Estate explains such omissions by saying that certain details were removed to "avoid unnecessarily prejudicing the reader."³⁶ But that explanation leaves the central question unanswered: **was the material removed because it was too revealing of her claimed visions — or because it had become too difficult to defend as history?**

3. Retrofitting 1860s Health Reform into Mount Sinai

On June 6, 1863, Ellen White claimed to receive her foundational "Health Reform" vision in Otsego, Michigan. Shortly thereafter, hygiene, diet, and physical cleanliness became non-negotiable spiritual mandates for SDAs. When White published *Spiritual Gifts* (volume 3) the following year in 1864, she took this contemporary 19th-century American hygiene crusade and retrofitted it directly onto the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai.

Exodus 19:10 records God's command that the Israelites wash their clothes before He descended upon Mount Sinai. White turned that ancient command into an explicit warning to her own contemporaries:

God required them also to wash their clothes. He is no less particular now than he was then. He is a God of order, and requires his people now upon the earth to observe habits of strict cleanliness. And those who worship God with uncleanly garments and persons do not come before him in an acceptable manner. He is not pleased with their lack of reverence for him, and he will not accept the service of filthy worshipers, for they insult their Maker.³⁷

White weaponized a biblical purification command to scold 1860s SDAs for unwashed clothing, declaring that dirty churchgoers **"insult their Maker"** and that God flatly rejects their worship. It smells entirely of its era, reflecting the mid-nineteenth-century American sanitary reform movements rather than divine revelation.

When White revised this narrative for a general audience in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, this 1864 hygiene sermon was completely excised. Pages 303–304 retain the command to wash "their person and their clothing," but the tirade condemning modern "filthy worshipers" who "insult their Maker" vanished without a trace.

Did Ellen White have a vision showing that God rejects dirty worshipers? If so, didn't the general population have a right to know that? Shouldn't people be made aware that they must cleanse their bodies and clothing thoroughly to avoid insulting God?

This heavy-handed hygiene mandate does not merely reflect nineteenth-century cultural bias; it flatly contradicts the explicit teachings of the New Testament. When the Pharisees condemned Jesus' disciples for failing physical washing protocols, Christ forcefully dismantled the notion that physical cleanliness dictates spiritual acceptance, declaring that defilement proceeds strictly from the heart, not unwashed hands or unwashed clothes (Mark 7:1–23; Matt 15:1–20). He repeatedly blasted religious leaders who obsessed over the exterior while neglecting inward purity, warning that cleansing only the outside of the cup creates nothing more than

whitewashed tombs (Matt 23:25–28). Furthermore, the Apostle James explicitly rebuked the early church for discriminating against a poor worshiper who enters the assembly in dirty or shabby clothes (James 2:1–5) — a direct biblical repudiation of White's assertion that God flatly rejects the unwashed.

If Ellen White's 1864 "revelation" were actually true, the famous Christian hymn would require an SDA rewrite: *"Just as I am, without one plea — provided I've laundered my suit, scrubbed my body, and dry-cleaned my coat before coming to Thee!"*

4. Satan's Body

Ellen White had a vision in 1858 that described Satan's body . The description is detailed: his forehead, eyes, facial expression, flesh, frame, and even the position of his chin. Scripture, however, consistently describes Satan and his angels as spiritual beings:

Ephesians 6:12: For we wrestle **not against flesh and blood**, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against **spiritual wickedness** in high places.

Hebrews 1:7, 14: And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels **spirits**... Are they not all **ministering spirits**, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

2 Corinthians 11:14: And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into **an angel of light**.

Revelation 16:13–14: And I saw three unclean **spirits** like frogs... for they are **the spirits of devils**, working miracles.

Now compare this consistent biblical testimony with what Ellen White claimed to have witnessed:

I was then shown Satan as he was, a happy, exalted angel. Then I was shown him as he now is. He still bears a kingly **form**. His **features** are still noble, for he

is an angel fallen. But the expression of his countenance is full of anxiety, care, unhappiness, malice, hate, mischief, deceit, and every evil. That brow which was once so noble, I particularly noticed. His forehead commenced from his eyes to recede backward. I saw that he had demeaned himself so long, that every good quality was debased, and every evil trait was developed. His eyes were cunning, sly, and showed great penetration. His frame was large, but the flesh hung loosely about his hands and face. As I beheld him, his chin was resting upon his left hand. He appeared to be in deep thought. A smile was upon his countenance, which made me tremble, it was so full of evil, and Satanic slyness.³⁸

This is a physical reading of character. White claims to see moral corruption written into Satan's body: his receding forehead, cunning eyes, loose flesh, facial expression, and even his posture. That is strikingly close to the logic of nineteenth-century phrenology and physiognomy, which claimed that a person's physical features could reveal his intellectual and moral qualities.

The connection is especially interesting given White's familiarity with phrenological ideas. In the nineteenth century, the now-discredited pseudoscience of phrenology was widely promoted as a way of understanding character through the shape of the skull, while physiognomy attempted to read character from facial features. A receding forehead, the shape of the eyes, facial structure, and other physical characteristics were assigned moral or intellectual significance. White's description of Satan uses precisely this kind of physical-to-moral vocabulary: the degraded mind is reflected in the degraded body, and the evil character can supposedly be read in the face.

Aside from the pseudo-scientific background of White's vision, the larger point remains. Scripture describes Satan and his angels as spirits; Ellen White claimed to have visually examined the physical marks of Satan's moral degeneration.³⁹

Her description fits comfortably within a nineteenth-century culture that believed character could be read from the body.

Then, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, the physical body disappears. The surrounding story survived.⁴⁰

If these details had actually been shown to Ellen White in vision, their disappearance raises an unavoidable question: *why remove what she supposedly saw with her own eyes?* In 1858, Satan's physical features were presented as supernatural observations. Then, the world changed. As phrenology collapsed from fashionable science into discredited pseudoscience, White's portrait of Satan began to look less like a revelation from heaven and more like a relic of the culture around her. By 1890, the embarrassing anatomy was gone. **When the pseudoscience collapsed, the vision did too.**

Why the Removals?

The pattern is becoming difficult to explain away as harmless editing. In 1858 and 1864, these things were presented as having been opened to Ellen White in vision. By 1890, the angelic denial was gone, the Moses legends were gone, the Mount Sinai hygiene sermon was gone, and Satan vanished. The biblical material remained. The questionable material did not. Whatever the explanation, that is not what we would expect if every detail had actually come from heaven.

This is not the worst of White's attempts to retrofit nineteenth-century ideas into ancient history. **Chapter 11 examines the most disturbing example of all: her doctrine of amalgamation.** This false and highly controversial teaching was removed when *Patriarchs and Prophets* was published.

Conclusion

The evidence presents an inescapable verdict. The evolution of Ellen White's narrative between 1864 and 1890 was not driven by repeated heavenly visions, but by standard human editing. What was added tracked line-by-line with the new commentaries arriving on her bookshelves; what was removed was quietly

scrubbed to erase undeniable biblical contradictions, unhistorical legends, and fanatical nineteenth-century rhetoric.

A true prophet does not need to consult nineteenth-century scholars to learn what happened at the Garden of Eden, nor does God need to quietly edit out His own mistakes at Mount Sinai. When a book's additions depend on human libraries and its deletions depend on damage control, the claim of divine revelation completely collapses. Ellen White was not recording eyewitness history shown to her in vision — she was relying on human minds.

¹ The material that was later incorporated into *Spirit of Prophecy* volume 1, and eventually into *Patriarchs and Prophets*, originated from the following three books: *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3 (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1864) - 304 pages. *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4a (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1864) - chapters 22-27, approximately 111 pages. *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1 (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Assn., 1858), chapters 1 (pages 17-19) and chapter 3 (pages 22-27), a total of 9 pages.

² Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, v.

³ *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1 (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1870) - 414 pages.

⁴ Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, ii. The Estate claims this was a "typographical" error. The sentence read: "This system [sacrificial system established at Eden] was corrupted before the flood, and by those who separated themselves from the faithful followers of God and engaged in the building of the tower of Babel." Another error fixed was White's assertion that "an angel" closed the door of the Ark (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 68). In *Patriarchs and Prophets*, she wrote "God had shut it." (page 98). Another error was her statement in *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3: "The father and son answered..." This was corrected in *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, to: "The father and brother answered..." which matches Gen. 24:50. Other minor errors, such as spelling and punctuation, were also fixed.

⁵ Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications, preface to *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. ii; The Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications, *Early Writings* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1882), comments in the preface, p. v2, March, 1963). See also: The Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications, *Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1 (1949), 16:

The visions continued all through her life's experience. Early among these, in 1858, was the comprehensive basic vision of The Great Controversy. Within six months of the revelation, the matter was ready for the public in the form of the little book *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 1, "The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels and Satan and His Angels" (Early Writings, part 3). In many succeeding visions the great controversy account was opened up in greater detail, and Mrs. White rewrote it, first in the seventies and eighties in the four volumes of the *Spirit of Prophecy* and later in the volumes of the Conflict of the Ages Series—*Patriarchs and Prophets*...

⁶ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 45. *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, 44, states it as follows: "Around these angels flashed beams of light on every side, which had the appearance of glittering swords."

⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 60.

⁸ Cumming, *Lives and Lessons*, on Eden and the Fall.

⁹ Thomas J. Conant, *The Book of Genesis: The Common Version Revised for the American Bible Union, with Explanatory Notes* (New York: American Bible Union, 1868), note on Genesis 3:24.

¹⁰ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 53. The same appears in *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, 60.

¹¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 80.

¹² Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History: Old Testament*, vol. 1 (London: Religious Tract Society, 1875–1887), 20, 22.

¹³ William Miles, trans., *The Shajrat ul Atrak, or Genealogical Tree of the Turks and Tatars* (London: W. H. Allen, 1838), 15.

¹⁴ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 105. Also in *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, 99.

¹⁵ Cumming, *Lives and Lessons*, "Abraham offering up Isaac."

¹⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 148.

¹⁷ *Columbian Family Bible*, note on Genesis 3:5.

¹⁸ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 40.

¹⁹ *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, 36.

²⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 54.

²¹ *Columbian Family Bible*, note on Genesis 42:24.

²² *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 157.

²³ *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, 142.

²⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 226.

²⁵ *Columbian Family Bible*, note on Genesis 41:16.

²⁶ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 150.

²⁷ *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, 136.

²⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 220.

²⁹ Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications, "Preface to Facsimile Edition," in Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, Facsimile Edition, ii.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 262.

³² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 304.

³³ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 182.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

³⁵ Karl. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1, The Pentateuch, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1864), at Exo. 2:10 n. Although Keil and Delitzsch's *Biblical Commentary* is listed in Ellen White's library inventory, this specific volume was not listed as being present at the time of the inventory (1993).

³⁶ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, Facsimile Edition, ii.

³⁷ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 262. Also, *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, 233.

³⁸ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, 27.

³⁹ SDA apologists might object that Scripture sometimes gives heavenly beings vivid physical description — Daniel's messenger with a "body like the beryl," a face "as the appearance of lightning," and arms "like in colour to polished brass" (Daniel 10:5–6); Ezekiel's four-faced, wheeled cherubim; the angels who eat a meal with Abraham and are seized by a mob at Lot's door (Genesis 18–19); the being Jacob wrestles until daybreak (Genesis 32:24–30). If Scripture can describe spiritual beings in physical terms, why not White? Look closely at what kind of physical description Scripture actually gives. It is cosmic, overwhelming, or deliberately spare — bronze limbs, faces of fire, wheels within wheels, four faces at once — or else it withholds physical description entirely, as with Jacob's opponent, who is never once described in bodily terms even while he dislocates a man's hip. Nowhere does Scripture offer an ordinary, diagnostic physical examination of a spiritual being's forehead, eye shape, or the way flesh sits upon its hands. That register belongs to nineteenth-century phrenology, not to apocalyptic literature. White's Satan is not overwhelming or symbolic; he is a man being sized up on a street corner — noted for exactly the features a phrenologist's manual would tell a reader to examine. The problem is not merely that Scripture calls angels spirits while White gives Satan a body. It is that even on the rare occasions Scripture does render spiritual beings in physical terms, it never does so in this manner. The genre itself is borrowed from her century, not from the Bible's.

⁴⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 40 (chapter 1, "Why Was Sin Permitted?") In the 1858 vision, White explicitly marks the transition from Lucifer before the fall to Satan afterward: "I was then shown Satan as he was, a happy, exalted angel. Then I was shown him as he now is." In *Patriarchs and Prophets*, that same transition remains in the same place in the story, but the physical description is gone. Instead, White writes that Lucifer, the "light bearer," **by transgression became Satan**, "the adversary."

3 ♦ Not a Product of Any Human Mind?

In 1934, L. E. Froom — one of the SDA sect's leading historians — wrote to W. C. White with a direct question: did the people around Ellen White ever bring outside material to her attention while she was writing? The question itself is worth considering. By 1934, an SDA scholar felt the need to ask the son of the prophetess, point blank, whether her books had been fed material from other authors. W. C. White's response wasn't a denial; it was an exercise in damage control that surrendered the entire premise.

In some of the historical matters such as are brought out in *Patriarchs and Prophets*...the main outlines were made very clear and plain to her, and when she began to develop these topics, she was left to study the Bible and history to get dates and geographical relations and to perfect her description of details. ...

This enabled her to select and appropriate that which was true and to discard that which was erroneous or doubtful.

Regarding the study of books...from the [Review] library Ellen White made selection of books which she considered profitable to read.

It was remarkable that in her reading and scanning of books that her mind was directed to the most helpful books and to the most helpful passages contained in those books. ...

You ask if her helpers brought statements to her attention which they thought would help her in her writings. Nothing of this kind occurred previous to the writing of Great Controversy, Volume IV, at Healdsburg, in 1883 or 1884. Then **it was seldom and related to minor details.**¹

Dressed in the soothing language of filial reassurance, this letter is a damning confession.

First, Willie attempts to sanitize her reliance on "history" books by claiming she consulted them merely to verify dates, geography, and to "perfect her description of details." Exactly how much "perfecting" did Ellen White do with those books? The remainder of this book will demonstrate that Ellen White did plenty of "perfecting" with them. At a minimum, Willie White admits what the sect spent decades denying: his mother sat at a desk with standard reference books open in front of her while writing her "heaven-sent" message.

Second, Willie assures Froom that Ellen operated with supernatural discernment — selecting only what was "true" and discarding everything "erroneous or doubtful." While Willie may have *thought* that to be the case, this book will prove that it is not. The human authors she copied from were fallible scholars who occasionally got their facts wrong. Ellen White blindly copied their factual blunders, historical misstatements, and outdated theories straight into her own text. She had no discernible divine filter.

Third, Willie claims that God personally "directed her mind" to the "most helpful passages" in the library. Consider the blasphemy buried in that excuse: W.C. White is essentially portraying the Holy Spirit as an accomplice to theft — a divine *plagiarism assistant* pointing Ellen to the exact pages she ought to steal.

This is as close as Willie would get to admitting the material in the book did not come from visions. To anyone capable of reading between the lines, the truth is glaring: Ellen White operated exactly like any other nineteenth-century compilation writer, sitting down with human reference books, cutting

passages, and stitching them together into her own manuscript. That is a fatal admission. Chapter One quoted Ellen White's explicit claim that her narrative was "*not the product of any human mind.*" Yet thirty-six years later, her own son admitted she read books produced by human minds and selected material written by human minds to construct her narrative. Both claims cannot be true. Someone is telling a White lie.

The letter's final paragraph is where the real concession sits. Froom's question was about whether helpers ever brought her material. Willie's answer is not a flat no. It is a no with a date attached: nothing of the kind occurred *before* the writing of *Great Controversy*, Volume IV — which he places in 1883 or 1884. After that point, by his own account, it did happen. His defense rests entirely on the two assuring words that follow: *seldom*, and *minor details*.

Patriarchs and Prophets was published in 1890 — six years after the date W. C. White himself sets as the beginning of assistant-supplied material entering his mother's writing. Is it true that her assistants "seldom" supplied material and that it was only "minor details"?

The Bookmaker

One of the most talented *human minds* behind the writing of many of Ellen White's most beloved books was **Marian Davis**.

Ellen White said the contents of *Patriarchs and Prophets* were traced upon her mind by the Holy Spirit "*as indelibly as the law was traced by the finger of God, upon the tables of stone.*"² That is a bold claim for a book whose preparation left behind a paper trail—a trail of an editor, a stack of reference books in her own library, and an author asking for more than mere editorial help.

While Ellen White stood as the public face of divine inspiration, Marian worked behind the curtain, gathering, selecting, arranging, and rewriting material until it became a finished manuscript. The correspondence that survives reveals an editor whose role went well beyond correcting prose. She functioned as an architect of the books themselves.

Consider what Marian Davis was actually doing. In 1884, she described her responsibilities in a letter to W. C. White:

To plan the work, to decide what portions of matter already written should go in the book, and what points should be more fully dwelt upon... the danger that some unguarded expression will be used, in preparing the matter, that will conflict with something previously written, in some other book.³

Notice what this reveals. Davis was not merely correcting grammar or polishing style. She was selecting material, expanding subjects, and, critically, comparing the manuscript against Ellen White's earlier books to prevent contradictions.

Preventing contradictions was no small concern. Ellen White's writings were already keeping corporate leaders awake at night wondering what would be the next inconsistency they would have to smooth over. Publishing any additional contradictions could further damage their prophet's already-crumbling credibility. Hence, one of Marian's key tasks was to keep the expanding body of "inspired" writings internally consistent.

The contrast with the biblical prophets is striking. Isaiah needed no editor to compare his latest prophecies with earlier scrolls. Jeremiah did not employ an assistant to screen his revelations for conflicts with previous ones. If *Patriarchs and Prophets* was simply a record of what the Holy Spirit traced on her heart, why did it require an editor to check it against her existing publications?

In the same letter, Marian made a request that contradicts the claim of divine origin:

Any information concerning the Douay Bible [sic] will be welcome. (It might be convenient to have these for reference.)⁴

The Douay is the Roman Catholic Bible, and it carried extensive commentary beneath the text — historical, geographical, and scholarly notes on nearly every passage. Marian wanted it “for

reference” while assembling a book its author would market as light given directly from heaven.

White herself made similar requests. Writing from Europe in 1885, in a letter otherwise full of spiritual counsel, she paused to ask her sons for research material:

Tell Mary to find me some histories of the Bible that would give me the order of events. I have nothing and can find nothing in the library here.⁵

One might wonder if White got more than the "order of events" from those books.

The same letter closes with a postscript that describes the editorial process. Marian had sent a list of corrections, to which White replied:

I have just one minute ago read the letters in which she has specified the improvements to be made in articles for Volume 1 [*Patriarchs and Prophets* was volume 1 of the Conflict of the Ages series]... That needs to be more carefully worded... I think I can make the articles specified more full; and as I am famous for moralizing, this will be no cross.⁶

Improvements to be made. Passages more carefully worded. Articles made fuller. Then, the author's own description of what she brings to the text — not revelation, but moralizing, at which she is “famous.” None could argue with that. But moralizing does not require a vision or a prophet.

The expansion of the text was managed the same way. Years earlier, Marian had written W.C. White hunting for a fuller version of an existing account:

We are anxious to learn whether an account of Jacob's night of wrestling with the angel has been written since Volume 1... Sr. White has given a very much more full description than is given in Volume 1. Can you give any information concerning such an article, whether it has ever been published, and when, and where?⁷

The "much more full description" was not descending fresh from heaven. It was a manuscript to be located, retrieved, compared, expanded, and worked into the growing book — the same editorial process that transformed the brief narratives of *Spiritual Gifts* into the much lengthier *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

How much of the finished wording belonged to Marian Davis cannot now be determined, but the correspondence already reveals what matters. *Patriarchs and Prophets* was assembled with editors, reference books, previous manuscripts, historical works, revision, expansion, and careful comparison against Ellen White's earlier publications. That is the production history of the book she later declared had been traced upon her mind by the Holy Spirit "as indelibly as the law was traced by the finger of God."

The Human Minds Behind the Book

The next chapters answer one simple question: **Where did the extra-biblical material in *Patriarchs and Prophets* come from?** Not the biblical text itself, but the motives, conversations, descriptions, historical explanations, and countless narrative details that Scripture never records.

To answer that question, those additions will be compared with nineteenth-century commentaries, Bible histories, and devotional works.

How the Comparisons Were Made

The investigation was intentionally conservative. Only books known to have been in Ellen White's library, or readily available to her, were considered.

The comparison focuses on the first twenty-one chapters of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, covering Genesis from Creation through Joseph. White's earlier account, *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 3 (1864), serves as a baseline. Material appearing for the first time in the expanded 1890 edition can therefore be isolated and compared with books published during the twenty-six years between the two editions.

Every example included in this study satisfies the same three requirements:

1. **Genesis does not contain the detail.**
2. **One or more nineteenth-century authors supply it—**usually identifying it as an opinion, conjecture, or probable explanation.
3. **Ellen White presents it as historical fact.**

The standards were deliberately strict. Numerous similarities were excluded because they could be explained by common biblical language, shared Christian interpretation, or because they failed one or more of the three tests above.

The first source examined is not from her library. It sat on a shelf in Ellen White's own household.

¹ W. C. White Letter to L. E. Froom, Dec. 13, 1934 (*Selected Messages*, Book 3 (1980), 462-463).

² Ellen G. White, Letter 90, 1906.

³ Marian Davis to W. C. White, March 26, 1884.

⁴ Marian Davis to W. C. White, March 26, 1884. The Duoay Bible was not listed in the White Estate as being among White's books, but they candidly stated they did not list the Bibles in her possession: "nor have we listed all Bibles...found on the original inventory." *A Bibliography of Ellen G. White's Private and Office Libraries*, Warren H. Johns, Tim Poirier, Ron Graybill (compilers), Ellen G. White Estate, 3rd ed., April, 1993.

⁵ Ellen G. White, Letter 38, 1885 (to J. E. White and W. C. White, Basel, Switzerland, December 22, 1885).

⁶ Ibid. The corrections concerned *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, the predecessor volume to *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

⁷ Mary A. Davis to W. C. White, February 26, 1879.

4 ♦ The Columbian Family Bible

Ellen White owned a copy of the *Columbian Family and Pulpit Bible* (1822). It was much more than a Bible. Beneath the biblical text ran commentary compiled from Poole, Brown, Coke, Scott, Doddridge, and Adam Clarke, along with notes from other respected commentators (see photo at right).¹

In other words, Ellen White did not have to visit a theological library to find these ideas. They were literally printed beneath the verses she was reading. Open Genesis, and there sat the opinions, explanations, and speculations of some of the best-known Bible commentators of her day.

Unlike Ellen White, these men usually admitted when they were guessing. Again and again, they wrote, "*perhaps*," "*some think*," "*it is probable*," "*the Jews were generally of opinion*," or "*it is thought*." They distinguished between what Scripture actually says and what they believed Scripture might imply.

Ellen White removed the question marks. She routinely turned their possibilities into certainties and presented them as facts revealed to her by God.

Four Things a Vision Cannot Do

The Columbian Bible provides four examples that stand out as being unattributable to a "vision." These involve material that a vision simply cannot produce.

1. The Same Sentence

In this example, Pharaoh has summoned Joseph from prison to interpret his dreams. Genesis records Joseph's humble reply: "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." The

biblical text stops there. Ellen White does not. Neither does the commentary beneath the text in her *Columbian Family Bible*.

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 41:16 ²	Patriarchs and Prophets ³
“It is not in me, &c. Joseph, modest and devout, disclaims all honour of the interpretation, and ascribes it to the true cause, the power of God. My knowledge is not greater than those you have consulted; it is God alone can explain these mysteries.”	“Joseph's reply to the king reveals his humility and his faith in God. He modestly disclaims the honor of possessing in himself superior wisdom. ‘It is not in me.’ God alone can explain these mysteries.”

The same sentence, preceded by the same observation that Joseph *modestly disclaims the honor*. That is not what Genesis says. It is what the commentary says.

A vision cannot explain why a nineteenth-century sentence written by a commentator appears inside a book whose author insisted it was “*not the product of any human mind*.” The vision did not produce that sentence. The commentary did.

2. Gopher Wood: Solving an Unsolved Hebrew Word

The Hebrew word *gopher* appears exactly once in the entire Old Testament. No one knows with certainty what kind of wood it was. Bible translators and commentators have debated it for centuries, and even the King James translators declined to guess. They simply transliterated the Hebrew word as *gopher*.

The commentary in Ellen White's *Columbian Family Bible*, however, was willing to venture an opinion:

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 6:14 ⁴	Patriarchs and Prophets ⁵
“Gopher wood, of which the ark was made, is but once mentioned in scripture, and is differently rendered by the learned: by some pine, by many cedar, but by others cypress, a tree very proper for the purpose, being of a firm and durable nature.”	“The material employed in the construction of the ark was the cypress, or gopher wood, which would be untouched by decay for hundreds of years.”

Notice what happened. The commentator openly admits there is disagreement. Some say pine. Many say cedar. Others say

cypress. He then sides with one view because cypress is exceptionally durable.

Ellen White reaches exactly the same conclusion. She identifies the wood as cypress and immediately emphasizes the identical reason—its extraordinary resistance to decay.

This is not the sort of detail someone "sees" in a vision. A vision may reveal an ark made of wood. It does not identify the durability qualities of the wood employed.

3. Seth: She Reproduces the Method, Not Just the Answer

In the case of the cypress wood, SDA apologists may argue that Ellen White simply shared the same view as other commentators. This example goes much further. She does not merely arrive at the same conclusion. She reaches it by following the same line of reasoning.

The commentary beneath Genesis 5:3 asks an obvious question: If Seth was a godly man, why does Scripture say Adam "begat a son in his own likeness"? The answer is found by comparing Genesis 5:1 with Genesis 5:3.

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 5:3 ⁶	Patriarchs and Prophets ⁷
“More particularly resembling him than his other sons, not only in his outward features, but also in his corruptions... for Adam's image is here plainly opposed to the likeness of God, wherein he is said to be created, ver. 1. And this is fitly said of Seth, to signify, that, although he was a worthy and good man... yet he, no less than the wicked Cain, was begotten and born in sin: and all the difference between him... and the wicked progeny of Cain, was not from the nature they received from Adam, but from the grace infused into them by God.”	“Seth... resembled Adam more closely than did his other sons. He was a worthy character, following in the steps of Abel. Yet he inherited no more natural goodness than did Cain. Concerning the creation of Adam it is said, ‘In the likeness of God made He him;’ but man, after the Fall, ‘begat a son in his own likeness, after his image.’ While Adam was created sinless, in the likeness of God, Seth, like Cain, inherited the fallen nature of his parents... By divine grace he served and honored God.”

This is not plagiarism of *words*. It is White copying the exact same multi-step *argument* used by the commentator in her Bible:

- Seth resembles Adam more than his brothers.

- He is a "worthy" man.
- He inherited the same fallen nature as Cain.
- The difference is divine grace.
- Most importantly, both writers build the entire argument by comparing Genesis 5:1 with Genesis 5:3.

That comparison is not found in Genesis. It is the commentator's method of explaining Genesis. Ellen White follows the same path to the same conclusion.

It gets worse. White not only follows the commentator's reasoning — she assembles the paragraph from multiple sources. The argument above came from her Columbian Bible. The wording in the rest of the paragraph was plagiarized from Alfred Edersheim.

Alfred Edersheim, Bible History ⁸	Patriarchs and Prophets ⁹
“his mother significantly called ‘Seth,’ that is, ‘appointed,’ or rather ‘compensation;’ ‘for God,’ said she, ‘hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel.’” “whereas we read of Adam that ‘in the likeness of God made He him,’ it is now added that ‘he begat a son in his own likeness, after his image.’ Adam was created pure and sinless in the likeness of God; Seth inherited the fallen nature of his father.”	“The name Seth, given to this son, signified ‘appointed,’ or ‘compensation;’ ‘for,’ said the mother, ‘God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel.’...” Concerning the creation of Adam it is said, ‘In the likeness of God made He him;’ but man, after the Fall, ‘begat a son in his own likeness, after his image.’ While Adam was created sinless, in the likeness of God, Seth, like Cain, inherited the fallen nature of his parents.”

That single paragraph in *Patriarchs and Prophets* is a composite. The observations that Seth "resembled Adam more closely than did his other sons," was "a worthy character," inherited "no more natural goodness than did Cain," and was changed only "by divine grace" come from the commentary in her Columbian Bible. Edersheim contributes the explanation of Seth's name, Eve's statement that "God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel," and much of the wording White uses to compare Genesis 5:1 with Genesis 5:3. The comparison

itself appears in both sources, but White combined them into a single seamless paragraph.

This is not what a person does after receiving a vision. It is what a writer does with two reference books open on the desk—taking an argument from one, a sentence from another, and weaving them together into a seamless narrative.

A vision might show Seth. It would not show a man comparing two verses of Genesis to construct a theological argument. This is editorial work, not revelation at work.

4. Adam's Death: An Entire Argument, Reproduced in Sequence

Genesis 5:5 explains Adam's post-fall life in one brief verse:

And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.

That is all that Genesis says.

The Columbian Bible fills the silence with a small essay. The same essay appears in White's book, with the same premises, in the same order, reaching the same conclusion.

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 5:5 ¹⁰	Patriarchs and Prophets ¹¹
“Our great progenitor, after living 930 years, resigned his spirit.... Besides the grief he bore for his own transgressions, he had the mortification to see a rupture in his family, which ended in the murder of Abel; he was witness to the general corruption which provoked the Almighty to destroy mankind by a deluge of water. He did not, therefore, think, when his life drew near its period, that the sentence of his Creator, which condemned him to death, was terrible. Nature would doubtless shrink at the execution of the decree, but his reason would justify providence in putting a period to a miserable life.”	“When he left Eden, the thought that he must die thrilled him with horror... Filled with the keenest remorse for his own sin, and doubly bereaved in the death of Abel and the rejection of Cain, Adam was bowed down with anguish. He witnessed the wide-spreading corruption that was finally to cause the destruction of the world by a flood; and though the sentence of death pronounced upon him by his Maker had at first appeared terrible, yet after beholding for nearly a thousand years the results of sin, he felt that it was merciful in God to bring to an end a life of suffering and sorrow.”

While Adam's life span came from the Bible, five extra-biblical correspondences — followed in order — came from the commentator:

1. Grief for his own sin
2. The murder of Abel
3. Witnessing the corruption that led to the Flood
4. The death sentence first appearing terrible
5. The reasoned acceptance that followed

Two people do not independently construct the same five-step case for why a man came to regard his own death sentence as mercy.

Borrowing Their Problems

The previous examples showed Ellen White borrowing the Columbian commentators' *conclusions*. The next group show her borrowing their *problems*.

In each case, the biblical text presents no difficulty at all. The problem exists only in the minds of commentators. They notice an apparent inconsistency, ask how it can be explained, and then propose a solution.

Remarkably, Ellen White answers the very same questions — even though the Bible never asks them. She inherits not only the commentators' conclusions, but also the problems that led to those conclusions. That is exactly what you would expect from someone reading annotated commentaries.

1. The Curse on Canaan

Genesis never pauses to defend God's justice in cursing Canaan. The objection comes entirely from the commentator, who worries that the punishment appears unfair. Ellen White then answers that very objection, using essentially the same explanation: Noah was not pronouncing an arbitrary sentence but uttering a prophecy of what Ham's descendants would become.

The coincidence is revealing. She does not merely share the commentator's answer. She shares his question.

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 9:25 ¹²	Patriarchs and Prophets ¹³
“This text, taken in the literal sense, seems to be a reflection upon the dispensations of Providence, and contrary to the principles of common equity, as it inflicts upon the innocent and unoffending the punishment due to the guilty... But this problem may be solved... if we consider the passage as a prophecy, which Noah then uttered... by foretelling, that his violation of filial duty would be retaliated upon him in the wretchedness and degeneracy of his children, and particularly in Canaan's race.”	“The unnatural crime of Ham declared that filial reverence had long before been cast from his soul... These evil characteristics were perpetuated in Canaan and his posterity... The prophecy of Noah was no arbitrary denunciation of wrath or declaration of favor. It did not fix the character and destiny of his sons. But it showed what would be the result of the course of life they had severally chosen.”

- The commentator asks whether God acted unjustly.
- He answers that Noah was giving a prophecy, not an arbitrary curse.
- Ellen White gives the same answer using much of the same vocabulary.

She adopts the commentator's anxiety about this passage — answering an objection the Bible never raises — utilizing similar vocabulary.

2. Defending Abraham

Abraham tells Pharaoh that Sarah is his sister. While the Bible itself does not comment on this, the Columbian commentators devise a six-part defense. What does White do?

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 12:13 ¹⁴	Patriarchs and Prophets ¹⁵
“This action of Abram's has been much censured by the ancient fathers; but it should be remembered, that Sarai was in reality his sister, by the father's side:—Abram, however, though not guilty of direct falsehood, was guilty of	“Abraham gave evidence that he was not free from human weakness and imperfection. In concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, he betrayed a distrust of the divine care... He reasoned that he was not guilty of

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 12:13 ¹⁴	Patriarchs and Prophets ¹⁵
prevarication; and, by a pusillanimous and unseasonable concealment of the truth, endangered the chastity of his wife; we may, notwithstanding, draw from Abram's conduct this moral reflection, that the brightest of men have their blemishes... since even Abram... was occasionally distrustful of the Divine Providence.”	falsehood in representing Sarah as his sister, for she was the daughter of his father, though not of his mother. But this concealment of the real relation between them was deception... Through Abraham's lack of faith, Sarah was placed in great peril.”

Notice what both writers are doing. Genesis simply reports the event. Neither Moses nor the biblical narrator pauses to defend Abraham's conduct. The *commentator* does, constructing a point-by-point moral defense. Ellen White follows the same path.

Both writers answer the same objection. Abraham was technically telling the truth because Sarah really was his half-sister. He was therefore not guilty of an outright lie, yet he was guilty of deception by concealing the whole truth. That deception placed Sarah in danger, and it exposed a temporary failure to trust God's protection. Even the concluding moral is the same: one of the greatest men of faith was not free from human weakness.

Genesis records the history. The commentary supplies the moral defense. Ellen White reproduces the defense.

3. Was Abraham Cruel to Hagar?

The next three examples follow the same pattern. Genesis simply records the events. The commentators, however, sense that readers may question the conduct of Abraham and Joseph, so they rush to their defense. Ellen White repeatedly joins the defense, offering essentially the same explanations.

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 21:14 ¹⁶	Patriarchs and Prophets ¹⁷
“If Abraham must be arraigned according to the custom of the present day, it will be difficult, if not	“The patriarch was thrown into great distress. How could he banish Ishmael his son, still dearly beloved?... The

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 21:14 ¹⁶	Patriarchs and Prophets ¹⁷
impossible, to acquit him of unfeeling cruelty... The patriarch intended no unkindness to Hagar; all he meant was to restore peace to his family, and this action was warranted by the command of God.”	Lord, through a holy angel, directed him to grant Sarah's desire... for only thus could he restore harmony and happiness to his family. Abraham obeyed the angel's word, but it was not without keen suffering.”

Notice the pattern. The commentator begins with the moral objection: Abraham appears harsh and unfeeling. He then argues that Abraham acted reluctantly, sought only to restore peace to his family, and obeyed God's command. Ellen White follows the same line of defense. Abraham is portrayed as deeply distressed, acting only under divine direction, with the restoration of peace in the household as the ultimate objective.

4. Was Joseph a Tale-Bearer?

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 37:2 ¹⁸	Patriarchs and Prophets ¹⁹
“He saw with grief the misdemeanours of his brethren, and reported them to his father, flattering himself that his salutary reprimands and counsels would be proper motives to correct their behaviour for the future.”	“As Joseph witnessed the evil conduct of his brothers, he was greatly troubled... He could not endure to see them sinning against God, and he laid the matter before his father, hoping that his authority might lead them to reform.”

Again, Genesis offers no defense of Joseph. The commentator worries that Joseph might appear to be an informer who betrayed his brothers. His solution is to portray Joseph's report as an act of loving concern, intended to bring about their reform. Ellen White reaches the same conclusion, explaining that Joseph reported their conduct because he hoped his father's authority would lead them to repentance.

5. Did Joseph Practice Divination?

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 44:5 ²⁰	Patriarchs and Prophets ²¹
“An unjust conclusion has been drawn from this text by many, who have supposed that Joseph practised the art of divination; but had they understood the true import of the Hebrew word, they would have had little ground for such an opinion.”	“He had never claimed the power of divination, but was willing to have them believe that he could read the secrets of their lives.”

Genesis never pauses to defend Joseph against the charge of divination. The commentator does. He argues that Joseph never practiced divination at all. Ellen White likewise anticipates the same objection, insisting that Joseph never claimed supernatural powers, but merely allowed his brothers to believe he possessed them. Once again, she answers the same question occupying the commentator rather than one raised by the biblical narrative itself.

6. Potiphar Secretly Believed Joseph

Genesis records a simple sequence of events. Potiphar hears his wife's accusation, and **"his wrath was kindled."** Nothing suggests he secretly doubted her story.

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 40:4 ²²	Patriarchs and Prophets ²³
“Potiphar, his old master, who was now convinced of his innocence by the confidence he placed in him; though, to conceal the dishonour of his wife, he still kept him in prison.”	“Had Potiphar believed his wife's charge against Joseph, the young Hebrew would have lost his life; but the modesty and uprightness that had uniformly characterized his conduct were proof of his innocence; and yet, to save the reputation of his master's house, he was abandoned to disgrace and bondage.”

Now read the verse itself:

And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that **his wrath was kindled** (Gen. 39:19).

Notice what happened. The biblical text says Potiphar became angry. The commentator found it problematic that an honorable man would condemn an innocent servant, so he invented an explanation: Potiphar knew Joseph was innocent but imprisoned him anyway to protect his wife's reputation.

Ellen White adopts the same explanation and expands it. Joseph, she says, would have been executed had Potiphar actually believed the accusation.

Furthermore, she had a second book in her library making the same excuse: *Lives and Lessons of the Patriarchs* by John Cumming — an author she frequently plagiarized. Cumming writes:

Potiphar seems to have had strong impression... that Joseph was falsely accused, that his wife was the guilty one, and privately, perhaps, he conveyed this, his own impression, to the jailer; for the jailer's instructions from his master were, to receive Joseph as a prisoner, that outward appearances might be saved, but to treat him as a friend and innocent servant.²⁴

Her Bible said the concealment protected the *wife*. Cumming said it protected *appearances*. Ellen White wrote that it was done “to save the reputation of his master's house.” She took Cumming's point-of-view on this.

A third book on her shelf made the same excuse. Thomas J. Conant, in 1868, could not reconcile the sentence with the charge either:

This fact, in connection with the confidence Joseph had before inspired, strengthened by an ingenuous and truthlike assertion of his innocence, may account for the lenity shown him, which is otherwise unintelligible.²⁵

Notice that last clause. A commentator is conceding that the biblical text does not make sense to him as it stands — and inventing a motive to make it fit. Three books did this. Ellen White took their solution and reported it as history.

This is not an additional detail supplied by revelation. It is an attempt to solve a problem the commentator perceived in Genesis—and one that the biblical text never asks to be solved. The commentary's attempt to soften our view of Potiphar becomes part of her inspired narrative.

By now the pattern is unmistakable. The Bible tells the story. The commentators worry about the story. Ellen White worries about exactly the same things. She repeatedly interrupts the biblical narrative to defend Abraham, Joseph, and Noah at precisely the points where nineteenth-century commentators felt compelled to defend them. That is not the fingerprint of independent revelation. It is the fingerprint of literary dependence.

Guesswork Promoted to Revelation

There is a world of difference between saying "*perhaps this happened*" and saying "*this is what happened*." Honest commentators know the difference. They mark the boundary between Scripture and speculation with words like "*perhaps*," "*it is thought*," and "*some suppose*." Ellen White repeatedly strips away those warnings. Their conjectures become her revelations.

1. The Serpent Had Wings

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 3:1 ²⁶	Patriarchs and Prophets ²⁷
"That the serpent was more mild and gentle... seems to be generally understood; that it did not creep upon the ground, but went with its head and breast reared up... Probably it was of the kind of winged serpents... termed fiery... because they appeared shining like fire, when flying in the air... The devil is thought, therefore, to have made use of this kind of serpent, that he might resemble one of those angels of light."	"Satan chose to employ as his medium the serpent—a disguise well adapted for his purpose of deception. The serpent was then one of the wisest and most beautiful creatures on the earth. It had wings, and while flying through the air presented an appearance of dazzling brightness, having the color and brilliancy of burnished gold."

Notice what disappears. The commentator repeatedly admits he is guessing: "**seems**," "**probably**," "**is thought**." Ellen White reports the same reconstruction as though she had seen it. The serpent no longer probably had wings—it **had** wings. It no longer appeared to resemble an angel of light—it flew through the air in dazzling splendor. Scripture says none of this. White turns the commentator's imagination into fact.

2. Fire Fell on Abel's Altar

Genesis 4:4 simply says, "The LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering." It never explains *how* Abel knew his sacrifice had been accepted. That silence invited centuries of speculation.

• Adam Clarke, Gen. 4:5²⁸ • Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 4:4–5²⁹ • Douay Rheims Bible, Gen. 4:4³⁰	Patriarchs and Prophets ³¹
Clarke: "Of the manner in which God testified his approbation we are not informed; it was probably, as in the case of Elijah, by sending down fire from heaven, and consuming the sacrifice." Columbian: "The Jews were generally of opinion, that the visible token of the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice was a fire or lightning that came from heaven and consumed it." Douay: "...we may suppose, by some visible token, such as sending fire from heaven upon his offerings."	"“And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering.” Fire flashed from heaven and consumed the sacrifice. But Cain... presented only an offering of fruit. There was no token from heaven to show that it was accepted.”

Ellen White had Adam Clarke's commentary in her library. He begins with a frank admission: "*we are not informed*." Only then does he venture a possibility — "*it was probably*" by fire from heaven. The Columbian Bible is equally cautious, attributing the idea to Jewish opinion rather than to the biblical text. The Douay hedges, "we may suppose, by some visible token..." The commentators are careful to distinguish between Scripture and speculation.

Ellen White did not own John Calvin's Genesis commentary. Had she consulted it, she would have found one of Christianity's greatest commentators warning that this very story rested on no scriptural evidence and should be rejected as a Jewish fable:

The Hebrews, according to their manner, report to divinations and imagine that the sacrifice of Abel was consumed by celestial fire; but, since we ought not to allow ourselves so great a license as to invent miracles, for which we have no testimony of Scripture, let Jewish fables be dismissed.³²

Ellen White does not merely choose one of the competing opinions. She transforms it into revelation. Every hedge disappears. Probably becomes certainty. Jewish tradition becomes eyewitness history. What careful commentators treated as conjecture, she presents as something the Holy Spirit had shown her.

3. Lamech Was Boasting

Genesis 4:23–24 is one of the most difficult passages in the entire book of Genesis. The meaning of Lamech's speech has puzzled interpreters for centuries, and the commentator beneath the text readily admits it.

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 4:23 ³³	Patriarchs and Prophets ³⁴
“To make any sense of this speech of Lamech to his wives, much ingenuity has been exercised... then, by reading these words... with an interrogation, the sense will be, ‘What should I fear?... If Cain be avenged seven-fold, surely, if any one were to slay me, I should be avenged seventy and seven-fold.’ No better sense has been found for this speech.”	“Lamech, the fifth in descent, added polygamy, and, boastfully defiant, he acknowledged God, only to draw from the avenging of Cain an assurance of his own safety.”

Notice the commentator's candor. "*Much ingenuity has been exercised.*" His proposed solution depends on repunctuating the Hebrew as a question — "What should I fear?" — and even then he cautiously concludes only that "*no better sense has been*

found." It is offered as the least unsatisfactory explanation of an exceptionally obscure text.

Ellen White treats the question very differently. The grammatical uncertainty disappears. The *least unsatisfactory* reading receives her prophetic approval. Lamech is no longer a figure whose obscure words *might* be understood as defiant; he becomes a man who is "boastfully defiant."

Once again, a commentator's tentative solution becomes prophetic certainty. Genesis never attributes any motive to Lamech. The commentator guesses. Ellen White presents his guess as revealed history.

4. The Balance Sheet of Temptation

When Potiphar's wife makes her advance, Genesis records Joseph's refusal in a single sentence. The Columbian Bible calculates what was at stake on either side. So does she — using the same terms.

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 39:9 ³⁵	Patriarchs and Prophets ³⁶
“He might naturally expect a concealment of his crime, and rewards and indulgences from his mistress; he might still have enjoyed his place, and expected advancement: on the contrary, he could hope for nothing, if he refused, but false accusations, disgrace, and perhaps death.”	“Joseph knew well what would be the consequence of resistance. On the one hand were concealment, favor, and rewards; on the other, disgrace, imprisonment, perhaps death.”

“Perhaps death” — verbatim — and the whole formula: concealment and rewards on one side, disgrace and death on the other.

5. The Butler Forgot

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 40:14 ³⁷	Patriarchs and Prophets ³⁸
“the conduct of the butler was like too many of the happy and successful in life: he thought no more of his late	“but when restored to royal favor, he thought no more of his benefactor. For two years longer Joseph remained a

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 40:14 ³⁷	Patriarchs and Prophets ³⁸
fellow-prisoner, and Joseph languished two whole years more in prison.”	prisoner. The hope that had been kindled in his heart gradually died out.”

The King James text reads, “Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.” *He thought no more of* is not Scripture's phrase. It is the commentator's invention.

6. Rebekah's "Stratagem"

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 27:5 ³⁹	Patriarchs and Prophets ⁴⁰
“She well knew that Isaac preferred Esau to Jacob... She was determined, therefore, if possible, to prevent it, and by stratagem, get it pronounced upon the head of her younger son.”	“Rebekah divined his purpose... She had in vain tried the effect of reasoning with Isaac, and she determined to resort to stratagem.”

7. Jacob's Vow Came from a Grateful Heart

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 28:20 ⁴¹	Patriarchs and Prophets ⁴²
“This was the natural overflowing of a grateful and pious heart.”	“Jacob was not here seeking to make terms with God... this vow was the outflow of a heart filled with gratitude.”

8. Why Did Jacob Send Messengers

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 32:3, 9 ⁴³	Patriarchs and Prophets ⁴⁴
“[Jacob] thought it his duty to make use of every prudential method to ensure his safety; he therefore sends this message to Esau, to soften the resentment he might still retain.”	“Yet Jacob felt that he had something to do to secure his own safety. He therefore dispatched messengers with a conciliatory greeting to his brother.”
“After this vigilant patriarch had done every thing that human prudence could suggest for his deliverance, he throws himself upon his God for protection.”	“He did all in his power to atone for the wrong to his brother and to avert the threatened danger, and then in humiliation and repentance he pleaded for divine protection.”

Genesis tells us that Jacob sent messengers to Esau, but it does not tell us *why*. The text simply records the action: “Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother” (Gen. 32:3). The motive has to be inferred from the surrounding circumstances.

The *Columbian Family Bible* supplies that inference. Jacob was using “every prudential method” available to ensure his safety and to “soften the resentment” Esau might still have felt. Then, after doing “every thing that human prudence could suggest,” Jacob turns to God for protection.

That interpretation appears almost intact in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Jacob had “something to do to secure his own safety,” so he sent Esau a conciliatory greeting. After doing “all in his power” to avert the danger, he pleaded for divine protection.

Patriarchs and Prophets does not merely reproduce an event recorded in Genesis. It reproduces the **commentator’s explanation of Jacob’s motive which Genesis leaves unexplained.**

Fraud Alert: According to Uriah Smith’s introduction to Ellen White’s book, this is the precise value that she added — revealing the “springs of action” behind the biblical narrative. People paid money to purchase a prophet’s divine insight into the motives of biblical characters. Little did they realize those motives were coming from a Bible commentary.

9. The Garment of Light

Columbian Family Bible, Gen. 2:25 ⁴⁵	Patriarchs and Prophets ⁴⁶
“It is the opinion of St. Chrysostom and others, that the bodies of Adam and Eve were arrayed in a luminous garment, that they needed no covering of artificial robes...”	“The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as the angels wear.”

This is more than a shared belief that Adam and Eve were clothed with light. It is the same literary contrast, expressed with the same unusual adjective. The commentator notes that the

artificial robes theory was merely an opinion. Ellen White adopts the commentator's language as though it was a fact.

10. “After the Manner of Men”

The parallel here is deeper than a shared phrase. Genesis contains two passages that seem to attribute human limitations to God. In one, He "remembers" His covenant. In the other, He "comes down" to investigate Sodom. The commentator recognizes the theological difficulty and resolves both passages with the same interpretive principle. Ellen White does exactly the same thing.

Columbian Family Bible ⁴⁷	Patriarchs and Prophets ⁴⁸
Gen 9:16: “This is spoken after the manner of men, and must not be supposed to indicate forgetfulness in God.” Gen 18:21: “the Omniscient Being was fully apprized of all the crimes committed in Sodom... it is undoubtedly a figurative expression, accommodated to the shallow capacities of the inhabitants of this terrestrial sphere.”	p. 106: “This does not imply that He would ever forget; but He speaks to us in our own language, that we may better understand Him.” p. 139: “God knew well the measure of Sodom's guilt; but He expressed Himself after the manner of men, that the justice of His dealings might be understood.”

Notice the pattern. On Genesis 9 the commentator explains that God does not literally remember because He had forgotten. On Genesis 18 he explains that God does not literally descend because He lacks information. In both cases the language is an accommodation to human understanding. Ellen White follows the same reasoning at the same two passages, even preserving the commentator's characteristic expression, "after the manner of men."

This is not a shared story or even a shared doctrine. It is a shared method of interpretation. Faced with the same two anthropomorphisms, both writers apply the same theological solution in the same places. The commentator explains difficult verses. White reproduces his explanations as though it was revealed to her.

And More...

Here are further instances from Genesis 1 to 50 where Ellen White adopts the extra-biblical ideas of the Columbian Bible commentators and occasionally even their very words:

The Commentator's Conjecture	Ellen White's Assertion
The creation landscape, Gen 1:26. "The world being now like a noble palace, ready furnished with all conveniences, the air pure and fit for respiration... the earth diversified with mountains, rivers, and verdant plains... God proceeded to make a more noble creature." ⁴⁹	"Its surface was diversified with mountains, hills, and plains, interspersed with noble rivers... The air, untainted by foul miasma, was clear and healthful. The entire landscape outvied in beauty the decorated grounds of the proudest palace." ⁵⁰
Man not made for solitude, Gen 2:18. "The contemplation of the beauties of nature would have no charms for him, were he deprived of companions to share the blessing with him... as the Septuagint... has it, a second self." ⁵¹	"Without companionship the beautiful scenes and delightful employments of Eden would have failed to yield perfect happiness... she was his second self." ⁵²
Purpose of Tree of life, Gen 2:9. "The fathers of the primitive church are of opinion" that its fruit maintained the body "without decay" and would "render the earthly bodies of mankind immortal." ⁵³	"In order to possess an endless existence, man must continue to partake of the tree of life. Deprived of this, his vitality would gradually diminish until life should become extinct." ⁵⁴
The chill after the Fall, Gen 3:7. "Others have imagined, that upon the fall of man... the air became inclement, and a cold shivering seized their limbs, which made them feel that their bodies stood in need of covering." ⁵⁵	"The air, which had hitherto been of a mild and uniform temperature, seemed to chill the guilty pair... and to supply its place they endeavored to fashion for themselves a covering." ⁵⁶
Hiding from God, Gen 3:8. "While our first parents were in a state of innocence and felicity, the approach of God was heard with joy and gladness... they should hide themselves in the thickest covers of the groves." ⁵⁷	"In their innocence and holiness they had joyfully welcomed the approach of their Creator; but now they fled in terror, and sought to hide in the deepest recesses of the garden." ⁵⁸
Cain's conversation, Gen 4:8. "It is very probable, that, in the course of this conversation, something passed	Supplies the entire dialogue — Cain's reproach, Abel's defense of God's justice, and the rising fury that ends in murder." ⁶⁰

The Commentator's Conjecture	Ellen White's Assertion
unpleasing to the already irritated mind of Cain." ⁵⁹	
Antediluvian longevity, Gen 5. "Doubtless it was ordered by the providence of God, that... knowledge and religion [be] more speedily propagated, and sciences sooner brought to perfection." ⁶¹	"their advantages for acquiring both religious and scientific knowledge were unrivaled." ⁶²
Enoch's translation, Gen 5:24. By it "God was pleased to comfort virtuous men in that early age with the sure and certain hope of a better life." ⁶³	"By the translation of Enoch the Lord designed to teach an important lesson. There was danger that men would yield to discouragement... [it] gave hope to man." ⁶⁴
Angels drove the animals, Gen 6:20. "by the care of God... or by instinct... or perhaps the ministry of angels was employed in bringing them to the ark." ⁶⁵	"Guided by holy angels, they 'went in two and two unto Noah into the ark.'" ⁶⁶ White picked the third option, then deleted "perhaps."
The windows of heaven, Gen 7:11. "Or, as it may be rendered the cataracts of heaven; for the rain did not fall in showers, but in floods." ⁶⁷	"Water appeared to come from the clouds in mighty cataracts." ⁶⁸ Adopting a proposed alternative rendering, not the KJV text.
A shoreless ocean, Gen 8:1. The survivors were "now floating on the vast billows of an ocean without a shore." ⁶⁹	"men looked abroad upon a shoreless ocean"... "flung from billow to billow." ⁷⁰
The raven, Gen 8:7. "It was a fit messenger, for Noah knew that as soon as the earth was dry it would be allured by the smell of dead carcasses to fly far from the ark." ⁷¹	"they sent out a raven, a bird of quick scent, to discover whether the earth had become dry." ⁷²
Waiting to leave the ark, Gen 8:16. "his piety would not suffer him to leave the ark until he received the command of God, as he had before received it for entering into it." ⁷³	"As he had entered at God's command, he waited for special directions to depart." ⁷⁴
First care, Gen 8:20. "God must be served in the first place... God is pleased with free-will-offerings." ⁷⁵	"it should be our first care to render our freewill offerings to God." ⁷⁶

The Commentator's Conjecture	Ellen White's Assertion
The dispersion, Gen 11:7. “It was necessary they should disperse, for the more speedily peopling the earth, and their scheme was, therefore, wisely defeated by the providence of their Creator.”⁷⁷	“This dispersion was the means of peopling the earth, and thus the Lord's purpose was accomplished through the very means that men had employed to prevent its fulfillment.”⁷⁸ Both assign the dispersion a purpose Genesis 11 itself never states — populating the earth.
Fire struck the tower, Gen 11:8. “Some of the Jewish doctors say, that this tower was overturned by a terrible tempest, or burned by a fire from heaven.”⁷⁹	“Lightnings from heaven, as an evidence of God's displeasure, broke off the upper portion of the tower.”⁸⁰ Genesis never says the tower was damaged in any way. It is a Jewish fable.
A monument of vanity, Gen 11:8. The tower “long remained a monument of human vanity.”⁸¹	“The monument to their pride became the memorial of their folly.”⁸²
Nahor's idols, Gen 12:1. “From the family of Nahor, which was become idolatrous, Gen. xxxi. 30.”⁸³	“His brother Nahor with his household clung to their home and their idols.”⁸⁴ Genesis 12 never mentions Nahor.
Souls gotten in Haran, Gen 12:5. Clarke: the phrase “may apply either” to servants “or” to converts, “and in this latter sense the Chaldee paraphrasts understood the passage.”⁸⁵	“During their stay in Haran, both Abraham and Sarah had led others to the worship and service of the true God.”⁸⁶ Clarke offers this only as one of two possible readings, explicitly attributed to the Chaldee paraphrasts. White drops the hedge and the attribution, stating it as settled fact.
The dusky Egyptians, Gen 12:14. “it is no wonder that such a woman appeared lovely to the swarthy and sun-burnt sons of Egypt.”⁸⁷	“he doubted not that the dusky Egyptians would covet the beautiful stranger.”⁸⁸
Senior and superior, Gen 13:8. “as superior and elder he might have persisted in his claim... but... proposes a friendly separation.”⁸⁹	“Abraham was Lot's senior in years, and his superior in relation, in wealth, and in position; yet he was the first to propose plans for preserving peace.”⁹⁰
Why Abraham feared, Gen 15:1. “It is natural to suppose that Abram... must be under some dread of their returning and taking ample vengeance on him for their defeat.”⁹¹	“the nations whose forces he had defeated would doubtless renew the invasion of Canaan, and make him the special object of their vengeance.”⁹²

The Commentator's Conjecture	Ellen White's Assertion
	Genesis gives no reason for the "Fear not."
The covenant ceremony, Gen 15:10. "This was a solemn ceremony used among several nations when they entered into any league or covenant." ⁹³	"employing such forms as were customary among men for the ratification of a solemn engagement." ⁹⁴
"Secondary wife," Gen 16:2. Sarai "judges it quite improbable... she therefore prevails upon Abram to take Hagar to be his secondary wife... [that] the divine promise [be] fulfilled." ⁹⁵	"Thinking it impossible that a child should be given her in her old age, Sarah suggested, as a plan by which the divine purpose might be fulfilled, that one of her handmaidens should be taken by Abraham as a secondary wife." ⁹⁶
Abraham's hospitality, Gen 18:2. "This venerable father did not wait the arrival of travellers at his tent, but ran out to meet them, to invite them to rest and refreshment." ⁹⁷	"Without waiting for them to solicit favors, Abraham rose quickly... and hastened after them... urged them to honor him by tarrying for refreshment." ⁹⁸
Abraham the intercessor, Gen 18:23. "an instance of the humanity and benevolence of Abraham that is not to be paralleled in history, except in the compassion of our Divine Redeemer Encouraged by the goodness of his cause, he draws near to God, and begs that the righteous may be saved." ⁹⁹	"The spirit of Abraham was the spirit of Christ. The Son of God is Himself the great Intercessor in the sinner's behalf." ¹⁰⁰
Lot at the gate, Gen 19:1. Either he held "some magisterial capacity," "or we may suppose him looking out, like Abraham, at his tent-door, for some opportunity of exercising his hospitality." ¹⁰¹	"Lot made it one of his duties to guard them at their entrance... lessons that he had learned from the example of Abraham." ¹⁰²
Lot's daughters, Gen 19:31. "It is natural too to suppose, that the daughters of Lot, having seen the unbounded licentiousness that reigned in Sodom, felt no great horror at the crime of incest." ¹⁰³	"The sinful conduct of his daughters was the result of the evil associations of that vile place. Its moral corruption had become so interwoven with their character that they could not distinguish between good and evil." ¹⁰⁴
Eliezer named, Gen 24:10. "The servant here mentioned seems to have been Eliezer; whose eldership in dignity	"Abraham committed it to 'his eldest servant,' a man of piety, experience, and sound judgment..." and she names him

The Commentator's Conjecture	Ellen White's Assertion
and trust is possibly meant, rather than in years.” ¹⁰⁵	Eliezer. ¹⁰⁶ Genesis 24 never names the servant.
Rebekah's consent, Gen 24:58. “No constraint was put upon the will of Rebekah... as the will cannot be forced, the choice should therefore be voluntary.” ¹⁰⁷	“None were required to marry those whom they could not love; but in the bestowal of their affections the youth were guided by the judgment of their experienced, God-fearing parents.” ¹⁰⁸
Esau's taking of two idolatrous wives did not affect Jacob's decision, Gen 27:1. “it is rather extraordinary that his marriage with two idolatrous women should not have prevented his father's partiality in his favour.” ¹⁰⁹	“Esau took two wives of the daughters of Heth. They were worshipers of false gods, and their idolatry was a bitter grief to Isaac and Rebekah. Esau had violated one of the conditions of the covenant, which forbade intermarriage between the chosen people and the heathen; yet Isaac was still unshaken in his determination to bestow upon him the birthright.” ¹¹⁰
Laban's excuse, Gen 29:27. Jacob was to keep Leah “for the honour of the family.” ¹¹¹	“the father insisted that Leah should not be discarded, since this would bring disgrace upon the family.” ¹¹²
Mahanaim, Gen 32:2. “Hosts or camps; probably from the angels appearing like two armies drawn up for his protection.” ¹¹³	“two hosts of heavenly angels seemed to encompass him... as if for their protection... Mahanaim—‘two hosts, or, camps.’” ¹¹⁴
The timidity of guilt, Gen 32:7. “An instance of the timidity of guilt... the consciousness of having injured his brother still disturbs his mind.” ¹¹⁵	“In his remorse and timidity he sought to avoid men... His sin in the deception of his father was ever before him... the reproaches of an accusing conscience making his journey very sad.” ¹¹⁶
The wrestler's identity, Gen 32:24. “Most commentators are of opinion, that it was an angel... but... there are some who suppose it was the eternal Logos, the Son of God.” ¹¹⁷	“It was Christ, ‘the Angel of the covenant,’ who had revealed Himself to Jacob.” ¹¹⁸ She takes the minority view here.
Simeon and Levi, Gen 34:25. The deed was “an outrage against every principle of humanity... well might he, even on his death-bed, cry out, ‘O my soul! come not thou into their secret.’” ¹¹⁹	“the tidings of their revenge filled him with horror... is shown by the words in which, nearly fifty years later, he referred to it, as he lay upon his deathbed in Egypt.” ¹²⁰

The Commentator's Conjecture	Ellen White's Assertion
Deborah's journey, Gen 35:8. "This woman came with her mistress from Mesopotamia to Canaan." ¹²¹	"Rebekah's nurse, Deborah, who had accompanied her mistress from Mesopotamia to the land of Canaan." ¹²²
Why Jacob sent Joseph, Gen 37:13. "The parental anxiety of Jacob was such, that knowing the danger... he sent Joseph... little suspecting that their malice... had risen to such a pitch." ¹²³	"the father began to fear for their safety... Had Jacob known the real feeling of his sons toward Joseph, he would not have trusted him alone with them." ¹²⁴
Prison severity, Gen 39:20. "during part of which time he was used with the greatest severity." ¹²⁵	"At the first Joseph was treated with great severity by his jailers." ¹²⁶
Why Simeon, Gen 42:24. He was "the principal actor" against Joseph — "The Rabbins even say, that he was the very person who put him in the pit." ¹²⁷	"Simeon had been the instigator and chief actor, and it was for this reason that the choice fell upon him." ¹²⁸ Genesis never says why Joseph chose Simeon.
Benjamin's portion, Gen 43:34. Done "to observe whether they would look upon their younger brother with the same envious eye they had done upon himself." ¹²⁹	"he hoped to ascertain if the youngest brother was regarded with the envy and hatred that had been manifested toward himself." ¹³⁰
An eloquent speech, Gen 44:18. "a beautiful mixture of manliness, simplicity and true eloquence; and indeed it was so pathetic and affecting, that Joseph found it impossible to carry on his deceit..." ¹³¹	"In words of touching eloquence he described his father's grief... Upon hearing Judah's noble offer... weeping aloud, he cried, 'I am Joseph.'" ¹³²
Struck dumb, Gen 45:3. "his brethren were struck dumb with astonishment." ¹³³	"His brothers stood motionless, dumb with fear and amazement." ¹³⁴
Court dangers, Gen 46:34. Declaring themselves shepherds "would procure their being settled in a distinct body by themselves, far distant from the snares of a court." ¹³⁵	"Joseph... sought to save his brothers from the temptations to which they would be exposed at a heathen court." ¹³⁶
Jacob's dim eyes, Gen 48:8. "Either through dimness of sight... Jacob had not as yet noticed the two young men who stood by him: but being told who	"Jacob's eyes were dim with age, and he had not been aware of the presence of the young men... On being told... the patriarch embraced and kissed them." ¹³⁸ Both writers add that Jacob

The Commentator's Conjecture	Ellen White's Assertion
they were, he desires to embrace them." ¹³⁷	was specifically unaware of their presence, not merely unable to identify them.
Simeon and Levi scattered, Gen 49:7. "the tribe of Levi had no inheritance... only a certain number of cities... The posterity of Simeon had a portion of Judah's inheritance." ¹³⁹	"Levi also received no inheritance except forty-eight cities scattered in different parts of the land... this tribe had only a small portion of Judah's lot." ¹⁴⁰

The White Estate advertises *Patriarchs and Prophets* as being written by an author with "unusual insights."¹⁴¹ This chapter demonstrates that many of the distinctive ideas of *Patriarchs and Prophets* did not descend from heaven. They ascended from the pages of her Columbian Bible.

¹ The Columbian Family and Pulpit Bible (Boston: Joseph Teal, 1822). The title page identifies the notes as drawn "from Poole, Brown, Doctors A. Clarke, Coke, Scott, Doddridge, &c.," with additions from "Michaelis, Lowth, Newcome, Blaney, Horsley, Campbell, Gerard, Macknight, &c." All subsequent Columbian citations are to the running commentary, "Practical Observations," at the verse indicated.

² Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 41:16.

³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 220, "Joseph in Egypt."

⁴ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 6:14.

⁵ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 95.

⁶ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 5:3.

⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 80.

⁸ Alfred Edersheim, *The Bible History, Old Testament* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1876–87), vol. 1, 20, 22.

⁹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 80.

¹⁰ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 5:5.

¹¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 82.

¹² Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 9:25.

¹³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 117–118.

¹⁴ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 12:13.

¹⁵ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 130.

¹⁶ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 21:14.

¹⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 146.

¹⁸ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 37:2.

¹⁹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 209, "The Return to Canaan."

²⁰ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 44:5.

- ²¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 229.
- ²² Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 40:4.
- ²³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 218.
- ²⁴ John Cumming, *Lives and Lessons of the Patriarchs Unfolded and Illustrated* (London: John F. Shaw, 1865), on Joseph falsely accused.
- ²⁵ Conant, Genesis, note on Genesis 39:7.
- ²⁶ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 3:1.
- ²⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 53.
- ²⁸ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, note on Genesis 4:5.
- ²⁹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 4:4–5.
- ³⁰ Douay Rheims Bible, commentary by Geo. Leo Haydock, (NY: Bryan Taylor & Co., 1885), note on Genesis 4:4.
- ³¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 71.
- ³² John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, note on Genesis 4:5. See also Keil and Delitzsch *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, note on Genesis 4:4.
- ³³ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 4:23.
- ³⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 81.
- ³⁵ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 39:9.
- ³⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 217.
- ³⁷ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 40:14.
- ³⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 219.
- ³⁹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 27:5.
- ⁴⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 180.
- ⁴¹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 28:20.
- ⁴² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 187.
- ⁴³ Columbian Family Bible, notes on Genesis 32:3 and 32:9.
- ⁴⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 195–196.
- ⁴⁵ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 2:25.
- ⁴⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 45.
- ⁴⁷ Columbian Family Bible, notes on Genesis 9:16 and 18:21.
- ⁴⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 106, 139.
- ⁴⁹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 1:26.
- ⁵⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 44.
- ⁵¹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 2:18.
- ⁵² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 46.
- ⁵³ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 2:9.
- ⁵⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 60.
- ⁵⁵ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 3:7.
- ⁵⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 57.
- ⁵⁷ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 3:8.
- ⁵⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 57.
- ⁵⁹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 4:8–10.
- ⁶⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 71–74.

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- ⁶¹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 5 (on the longevity of the antediluvians).
- ⁶² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 82.
- ⁶³ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 5:24.
- ⁶⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 88–89.
- ⁶⁵ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 6:20.
- ⁶⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 97.
- ⁶⁷ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 7:11.
- ⁶⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 101.
- ⁶⁹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 8:1.
- ⁷⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 100.
- ⁷¹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 8:7.
- ⁷² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 105.
- ⁷³ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 8:16.
- ⁷⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 105.
- ⁷⁵ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 8:20.
- ⁷⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 105.
- ⁷⁷ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 11:7.
- ⁷⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 120.
- ⁷⁹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 11:8.
- ⁸⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 119.
- ⁸¹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 11:8.
- ⁸² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 123.
- ⁸³ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 12:1.
- ⁸⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 127.
- ⁸⁵ Adam Clarke, *Commentary*, note on Genesis 12:5; cf. Matthew Henry, *Exposition*, on Genesis 12:5.
- ⁸⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 127.
- ⁸⁷ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 12:14.
- ⁸⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 130.
- ⁸⁹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 13:8.
- ⁹⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 132.
- ⁹¹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 15:1.
- ⁹² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 136.
- ⁹³ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 15:10.
- ⁹⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 137.
- ⁹⁵ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 16:2.
- ⁹⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 145.
- ⁹⁷ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 18:2.
- ⁹⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 138.
- ⁹⁹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 18:23.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 139–140.
- ¹⁰¹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 19:1.
- ¹⁰² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 157–158.

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- ¹⁰³ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 19:31.
¹⁰⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 167.
¹⁰⁵ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 24:10.
¹⁰⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 171, 173.
¹⁰⁷ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 24:58.
¹⁰⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 171.
¹⁰⁹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 27:1.
¹¹⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 179.
¹¹¹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 29:27.
¹¹² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 189.
¹¹³ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 32:2.
¹¹⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 195.
¹¹⁵ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 32:7.
¹¹⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 183, 195.
¹¹⁷ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 32:24.
¹¹⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 196.
¹¹⁹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 34:25.
¹²⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 204.
¹²¹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 35:8.
¹²² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 206.
¹²³ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 37:13.
¹²⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 210.
¹²⁵ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 39:20.
¹²⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 218.
¹²⁷ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 42:24.
¹²⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 225.
¹²⁹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 43:34.
¹³⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 226.
¹³¹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 44:18.
¹³² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 230.
¹³³ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 45:3.
¹³⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 230.
¹³⁵ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 46:34.
¹³⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 233.
¹³⁷ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 48:8.
¹³⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 234.
¹³⁹ Columbian Family Bible, note on Genesis 49:7.
¹⁴⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 235.
¹⁴¹ Ellen G. White Estate, <https://whiteestate.org/audio/84/patriarchs-and-prophets/>, extracted Sep. 5, 2026.

5 ♦ Thomas Conant

Thomas Jefferson Conant (1802–1891) was a Hebrew scholar and Bible translator. One of his most acclaimed works was *The Book of Genesis* (1868) — a book found in Ellen White's library. This book deals with translation choices, the meaning of Hebrew words, and places where the English translation fails to convey what the Hebrew says.

That makes Conant particularly important. A commentary like the *Columbian Family Bible* can supply a narrative idea or an interpretation that someone might arrive at independently. Conant supplies something much more specific: **a particular conclusion about what a Hebrew word or phrase means.** When that same conclusion appears in *Patriarchs and Prophets* — written by a woman with no training in Hebrew — it is difficult to explain as independent insight.

One myth popularized by SDA apologists suggests that Ellen White's interpretation of certain Bible passages indicates that she possessed supernatural knowledge of Hebrew. However, there is a far less miraculous explanation. **She had a Hebrew scholar sitting on her bookshelf who had already done the heavy lifting for her.**

Parallels with Conant

Five examples are provided below. Each is absent from White's 1864 *Spiritual Gifts* account, each appearing only after Conant's volume had entered her library.

1. Terah's Household: True Worship Mixed with Idolatry

Genesis 11:26–32 gives Terah's genealogy and tells us that the family left Ur and settled in Haran. It says nothing about idolatry in Terah's household. The only biblical passage that raises the question is Joshua 24:2, where Joshua says that Israel's fathers once “served other gods.” But Joshua does not tell us whether that idolatry belonged to Abraham's immediate family or to an earlier generation.

Conant chooses one side of that ambiguity and presents it as the explanation:

The true God continued to be acknowledged among the immediate ancestry of Abraham; and we are to understand Joshua 24:2, as meaning, that **with this knowledge were connected idolatrous superstitions and practices.**¹

Patriarchs and Prophets gives essentially the same interpretation:

Thus far his father's family accompanied him, for **with their idolatry they united the worship of the true God.**²

The point is not simply that both writers mention idolatry. **Both resolve the same biblical ambiguity in the same way:** Terah's household supposedly retained knowledge of the true God while practicing idolatry alongside it. Genesis never says this. Joshua 24:2 does not require it. Conant supplies the interpretation, and *Patriarchs and Prophets* presents the same interpretation as historical fact.

There is also chronological evidence. Ellen White's 1864 account says only that Abraham was called out of “his idolatrous nation.”³ It says nothing about idolatry within his father's household. That specific detail appears in 1890 — after Conant's *The Book of Genesis* had entered her library.

The Hebrew scholar provides the interpretation; the prophetess provides the certainty.

2. Nahor Stayed in Haran

Genesis 12:1 records God's command to Abram: leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house. But Genesis never tells us where Nahor, Abram's brother, went. His absence from the journey to Canaan is simply unexplained.

Conant reconstructs the answer by comparing several later passages:

“Nahor either preceded or followed them as far as Haran, and **remained there**. This is evident from ch. 24:10, 29, and 27:43; a comparison of the last two passages showing that ‘the city of Nahor,’ mentioned in the first, was Haran.”⁴

Conant shows the reader how he arrives at Haran. *Patriarchs and Prophets* gives the same conclusion as established history:

“Here [Haran] Abraham remained till the death of Terah. But from his father’s grave the divine Voice bade him go forward. His brother Nahor with his household **clung to their home**...”⁵

Genesis never says that Nahor remained in Haran. The conclusion must be reconstructed from the later references — precisely the work Conant had already done. White simply presents the reconstruction as fact.

And the chronology is significant. Ellen White's 1864 account says nothing about Nahor. The detail appears for the first time in 1890, after Conant's 1868 book was available to her.

3. Mahanaim: Two Hosts, or Two Camps

Genesis 32:1–2 records that Jacob met the angels of God and named the place Mahanaim. The name means “two camps” or “two hosts,” but Genesis does not explain what the two camps represented or why the angels were encamped around Jacob.

Conant supplies both the Hebrew rendering and the explanation:

Mahanaim; meaning, two camps (or, two hosts), that of the angels encamping near him for his protection, and his own.⁶

Patriarchs and Prophets gives the same interpretation, including the same parenthetical gloss:

Two hosts of heavenly angels seemed to encompass him behind and before...as if for their protection...Mahanaim — ‘two hosts, or, camps.’⁷

What is remarkable is the combination: the same translation of the Hebrew name and the same explanation of what the two hosts represented. Conant says one camp was Jacob’s and the other was the angels encamped near him for his protection. *Patriarchs and Prophets* presents the same picture. And in 1864, Ellen White gave no explanation of Mahanaim at all.

This is not merely a similar interpretation. **Conant explains the Hebrew; White reproduces the explanation.**

4. The Coat: A Mark of Rank, Not of Color

Every reader of the KJV knows Joseph’s “coat of many colours” (Gen. 37:3). But the Hebrew phrase behind that translation, *k’thoneth passim*, is disputed. Some scholars understand it as a garment distinguished by color or pattern; others understand it as an unusually long garment. Conant takes the latter position and explains what made Joseph’s coat distinctive:

A full length garment; covering the whole person, the body of the garment extending to the feet, and the sleeves to the wrists. Such garments were worn only by persons exempted from manual labor, and were indicative of rank and wealth. The injudicious partiality of Jacob conferred this distinction on the favorite child of his old age. On the contrary, the ordinary dress... extended but a little below the knee, the sleeves reaching only to the elbow.⁸

Patriarchs and Prophets abandons the familiar “many colours” description and gives essentially the same interpretation:

The father's injudicious gift to Joseph of a costly coat, or tunic, such as was usually worn by persons of distinction, seemed to them another evidence of his partiality.⁹

The chronology makes this especially interesting. In *Spiritual Gifts* (1864), Ellen White herself called it a “coat of many colors.”¹⁰ By 1890, however, the colors have disappeared. So has the ordinary English description. What replaces them is the interpretation found in Conant: Joseph's garment was costly, distinctive, and associated with social rank. Conant says it was worn by persons “exempted from manual labor” and was “indicative of rank and wealth.” White calls it a garment “usually worn by persons of distinction.”

The Hebrew scholar changes the coat; the prophetess follows the change.

5. Who Actually Sold Joseph?

Genesis 37:28 contains a genuine textual difficulty. The King James Version reads:

Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmeelites.

That creates an obvious question: *Who actually pulled Joseph from the pit and sold him?* The grammar has been debated for centuries. The verse appears to make the Midianites the ones who drew Joseph out and sold him to the Ishmaelites. Yet Joseph later tells his brothers, “ye sold me hither” (Gen. 45:5), which points in the opposite direction.

Conant examines the difficulty and explicitly argues that the “they” who drew Joseph from the pit and sold him were **his brothers**, not the Midianites:

Judah...proposes to spare his life, and sell him to the Ishmaelites...There is hardly room for doubt, that by the subject of the second and third [clauses] — ‘they drew,’ ‘they sold’ — are meant **the brothers of**

Joseph...[not] the Midianites...Compare Judah's proposal...and Joseph's statement, ch. 45:5, 'ye sold me hither.'¹¹

Patriarchs and Prophets adopts the same solution:

Judah now proposed to sell their brother to these heathen traders...To this proposition all agreed, and Joseph was quickly drawn out of the pit.¹²

The chronology makes this particularly difficult to explain as coincidence. In 1864, Ellen White follows the KJV account and has the Midianites involved in drawing Joseph from the pit and selling him, quoting Genesis 37:26–28 nearly verbatim.¹³ But in 1890, the Midianites have disappeared from the transaction. Without the Midianites in the scene, it is now inferred that Joseph's own brothers draw him from the pit and sell him directly to the Ishmaelites — the very interpretation Conant had argued for in 1868.

This is more than a shared interpretation. **White changed her account to match the Hebrew scholar's solution to a disputed text.**

Conclusion

These are five places where White knows the very thing the Hebrew scholar had worked out. The ordinary English text leaves the question open, obscures the meaning, or points the reader in another direction. Conant works through the problem. His solution resolves a difficulty that requires specialized Hebrew knowledge or careful cross-referencing. In every case, *Patriarchs and Prophets* arrives at the same solution.

The chronology helps identify Conant as the source of White's Hebrew knowledge. White's 1864 account lacks these details. Conant's book appeared in 1868. The expanded details appear in *Patriarchs and Prophets* in 1890. **The Hebrew answers were not in White's earlier account. They appear after the Hebrew scholar enters the story.**

¹ Thomas J. Conant, *Genesis*, note on Genesis 11:26, referring to Joshua 24:2.

² Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 127.

³ Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3 (1864), 98.

⁴ Conant, *Genesis*, note on Genesis 11:31.

⁵ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 127.

⁶ Conant, *Genesis*, note on Genesis 32:2.

⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 195.

⁸ Conant, *Genesis*, note on Genesis 37:3.

⁹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 208.

¹⁰ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3 , 140.

¹¹ Conant, *Genesis*, note on Genesis 37:26–28.

¹² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 210.

¹³ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 141.

6 ♦ John Cumming

John Cumming (1807–1881) was a prominent Scottish clergyman, author, and influential preacher in London. His vivid, descriptive commentaries were extensively published in both Britain and the United States, making his works standard holdings in nineteenth-century American Protestant libraries.

If Conant supplied Hebrew technicalities and historical notes, John Cumming supplied something entirely different. His *Lives and Lessons of the Patriarchs* (1865), found in Ellen White's library, is not a scholar's commentary but a preacher's exposition. He is interested in motives, moral lessons, applications, and the spiritual significance of biblical events.

Those are precisely the kinds of additions that suddenly appear in the expanded *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Characters acquire motives. Decisions receive moral explanations. Actions are given spiritual significance. The biblical story becomes richer — not because White had a revelation, but because a new book entered her library. Following are extra-biblical examples of where White picked up ideas from Cumming and turned them into facts:

John Cumming, 1865	Patriarchs and Prophets
God celebrates the first marriage. “Marriage has a divine foundation, its origin is in Deity; God was the first celebrant of the holy rite... Inspiration alone decides the question, ‘Marriage is honourable in all.’” ¹	“God celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. ‘Marriage is honorable’ (Hebrews 13:4).” ²
Altar built when tent planted. “Wherever he halted and pitched his tent, there he raised an altar... wherever	“Wherever he pitched his tent, close beside it was set up his altar, calling all

John Cumming, 1865	Patriarchs and Prophets
he pitched his tent for himself, there he raised an altar for the worship of God.” ³	within his encampment to the morning and evening sacrifice.” ⁴
Abraham's boldness, Spirit of Christ. “Abraham prayed with humility, and fervour, and yet with boldness... Abraham, in the spirit of Jesus, groaned at the certain catastrophe of Sodom.” ⁵	“Abraham asked not once merely, but many times. Waxing bolder as his requests were granted...” “The spirit of Abraham was the spirit of Christ.” ⁶
Why Lot lingered. “his lingering was not altogether love of Sodom; but the poor man's heart was so broken, his expectations so shocked, his hopes so crushed by all that he saw, that I believe he was bewildered and paralyzed.” ⁷	“It was hard to forsake his luxurious home and all the wealth acquired by the labors of his whole life... Stupefied with sorrow, he lingered, loath to depart.” ⁸
Melchizedek's bread and wine. Not a sacrificial act but “a hospitable act — a refreshment to a weary and way-worn warrior.” ⁹	“Melchizedek, king of Salem, who brought forth bread and wine for the refreshment of his army.” ¹⁰
The coat. “it was indiscreet in him to show that he entertained a peculiar and disproportionate affection... Jacob, evidently with great imprudence, gave to the son whom he loved most a distinctive badge.” ¹¹	“The father's injudicious gift to Joseph of a costly coat... seemed to them another evidence of his partiality.” ¹² In 1864 she had blamed nobody.
The vow at Bethel. “the sacred words unfortunately seem to convey that Jacob made a sort of mercenary bargain with God... But this is not the exact rendering.” ¹³	“Jacob was not here seeking to make terms with God... this vow was the outflow of a heart filled with gratitude.” ¹⁴
Eliezer's errand. “he was intensely and faithfully devoted to his work... he would not even eat until he had explained the whole matter.” ¹⁵	“Eliezer would not partake of food until he had told his errand.” ¹⁶
Rebekah at the well. “It does not altogether suit our ideas and habits that females of the highest rank should draw water... for she was of a high family, and of distinguished birth.” ¹⁷	“a service which it was customary even for the daughters of princes to perform for their fathers' flocks and herds.” ¹⁸
Deborah the nurse. “It is the habit, in Eastern countries, to give special honour to a nurse... The nurse of the	“one who had long been an honored member of his father's family — Rebekah's nurse, Deborah.” ²⁰

John Cumming, 1865	Patriarchs and Prophets
family was of old a very important personage.” ¹⁹	
“My lord Esau.” “He advisedly gave Esau a title of dignity... Jacob still addressed Esau as if he, the elder, had obtained what he was entitled to — the blessing.” ²¹	“it had been foretold... that the elder should serve the younger, and, lest the memory of this should be a cause of bitterness, Jacob told the servants they were sent to ‘my lord Esau.’” ²²

When a Magazine Article Becomes Revelation

One example shows how multiple sources were used by White. Genesis says that Lot lingered when the angels urged him to leave Sodom. It does not tell us what was going through his mind. Cumming supplies an explanation: Lot's heart was broken, his hopes were crushed, and he was left “bewildered and paralyzed.” White incorporates these ideas into *Patriarchs and Prophets* but White adds details that Cumming does not mention, such as Lot reluctance to leave his “luxurious home.” Did these details come to her in a vision?

Cumming was not the only nineteenth-century Christian author to add extra-biblical details to the story of Lot in Sodom. In 1882, G. A. Lofton wrote in an article:

Lot feels himself secure in his splendid and luxurious home... Lot seemed impressed with a stupid sense of unbelief. He was reluctant to leave his home and his other children, and he lingered.²³

Eight years later, *Patriarchs and Prophets* gives us this:

It was hard to forsake his luxurious home and all the possessions he had gained. Stupefied with sorrow, he lingered, loath to depart.²⁴

Genesis does not mention Lot's luxurious home. It does not say that he was stupefied, reluctant, unbelieving, or emotionally paralyzed. Those are interpretations of what was happening inside Lot's mind. Yet three of those distinctive ideas appear together in Lofton, and the same cluster appears again in White.

The biblical text gives the event. The preacher imagines the internal motives of the characters. Then, the prophetess paraphrases the preacher and presents it as though it had been revealed to her.

The Preacher Behind the Prophetess

In the introduction to *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Uriah Smith explained that White's book would provide insight into the motives of biblical characters. It certainly does. But that raises the more important question: **where did those motives come from?**

- Genesis tells us that Lot lingered; Cumming explains why.
- Genesis records Jacob's vow; Cumming explains what Jacob meant by it.
- Genesis records Abraham pleading for Sodom; Cumming describes the spirit in which he prayed.
- Genesis says Eliezer was given food; Cumming tells us why he refused to eat until he had completed his mission.

Again and again, the biblical narrative provides the skeleton while Cumming supplies the flesh.

The chronology makes the pattern even harder to dismiss. Cumming's book appeared in 1865. Ellen White's 1864 account does not contain these additions. They appear in the expanded *Patriarchs and Prophets* of 1890.

The visions did not merely become more detailed. They began to sound like the preacher's commentary.

¹ Cumming, *Lives and Lessons*, on Eden and the institution of marriage.

² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 45.

³ Cumming, *Lives and Lessons*, on Abraham.

⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 128.

⁵ Cumming, *Lives and Lessons*, "Abraham pleading for the Cities of the Plain."

⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 140.

⁷ Cumming, *Lives and Lessons*, on Lot in Sodom.

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- ⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 160.
- ⁹ Cumming, *Lives and Lessons*, "Abraham and Melchisedek."
- ¹⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 136.
- ¹¹ Cumming, *Lives and Lessons*, "Joseph and his Brothers."
- ¹² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 209.
- ¹³ Cumming, *Lives and Lessons*, "The fugitive Jacob and his Dream."
- ¹⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 187.
- ¹⁵ Cumming, *Lives and Lessons*, "Patriarchal Wedding."
- ¹⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 173.
- ¹⁷ Cumming, *Lives and Lessons*, "Patriarchal Wedding."
- ¹⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 172.
- ¹⁹ Cumming, *Lives and Lessons*, on the death of Deborah.
- ²⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 206.
- ²¹ Cumming, *Lives and Lessons*, on Jacob's meeting with Esau.
- ²² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 196.
- ²³ G. A. Lofton, "Lot and Sodom," *The Preacher's Monthly*, vol. 3 (London: J. Lobb, 1882), 94-96. The White Estate has no published catalog of the periodicals Ellen White read or had in her possession. She was known for collecting articles from periodicals and she was in England in 1885 when writing *Patriarchs and Prophets*. No further connection can be made other than the similarity in wording itself: Lot owning a "luxurious home" appears to be unique to Lofton during the nineteenth century.
- ²⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 160. On page 162 another extra-biblical similarity can be found — people getting up for work on the day Sodom was destroyed:
- White, 162 Lofton, 96 "The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar." The bright rays of the morning seemed to speak only prosperity and peace to the cities of the plain. The stir of active life began in the streets; men were going their various ways, intent on the business or the pleasures of the day. Unconscious of their doom thousands begin to rise and resume the vocations of the day, while the worn-out revelers of the night fall as unconsciously to sleep. Already has the sun risen upon Zoar and Lot has entered this distant city.

7 ♦ Alfred Edersheim

Alfred Edersheim (1825–1889) was a Jewish-born Austrian scholar who converted to Christianity and became a prominent Presbyterian minister and Anglican scholar in England. Celebrated for his deep mastery of Rabbinic literature and ancient Jewish history, he authored monumental historical works including the seven-volume *The Bible History: Old Testament* (1876–1887). His writings were in Ellen White's library and became a primary, uncredited source for some of her major books.

Walter Rea identified Alfred Edersheim as an author that Ellen White plagiarized heavily from. This analysis will highlight parallels not already published by Rea. By now the pattern scarcely needs explaining. A new commentary appears on Ellen White's shelf. Years later, its distinctive details appear in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

Parallels to Edersheim

1. The Laws of Caste

Willie's explanation of his mother's use of books — highlighted in Chapter Three — is that God providentially guided her to reliable sources. Even if she borrowed from commentators, the Holy Spirit supposedly led her to the truth, giving her the discernment to separate what was correct from what was erroneous. Put more simply, God was supposedly an accessory to the theft. But that defense collapses the moment the prophet takes not only the commentators' "truth," but their mistakes as well.

Genesis 43:32 gives a simple explanation for why Joseph, his brothers, and the Egyptians ate at separate tables: "the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians." Nothing more is said.

That is exactly how Ellen White explained the passage in 1864:

Joseph did not eat at the same table with his brethren, for the Egyptians considered it **an abomination** for them to eat bread with the Hebrews.¹

By 1890, however, the explanation had changed.

Alfred Edersheim, Bible History ²	Patriarchs and Prophets ³
"Of course, after the Egyptian fashion, Joseph ate by himself, and the Egyptians by themselves; he as a member of the highest caste, and they from religious scruples."	"By the laws of caste the Egyptians were forbidden to eat with people of any other nation. The sons of Jacob had therefore a table by themselves, while the governor, on account of his high rank, ate by himself, and the Egyptians also had separate tables."

Notice that both writers introduce *caste*. Both explain the tables the same way. Both distinguish Joseph's separation as a matter of *rank*.

The difficulty is that **ancient Egypt had no caste system**. The idea came from a long-standing misunderstanding of Herodotus and was repeated throughout nineteenth-century literature. Modern Egyptology rejects it. Egyptian society was highly stratified, but it was not governed by hereditary caste laws.

Notice what happened. In 1864 Ellen White repeated the biblical explanation. By 1890 she had adopted Edersheim's extra-biblical "law of caste" explanation — including his historical error.

The SDA defense requires that God chose this explanation from Edersheim. However, the explanation is wrong. The error belongs to nineteenth-century scholarship, not to Genesis.

In 1864, Ellen White simply repeated Scripture. By 1890, she had added Edersheim's extra-biblical explanation —

including his mistake. **That is exactly what we would expect if she was copying Edersheim without any divine assistance.**

2. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah

Jacob, dying, calls Judah a lion's whelp. Genesis says nothing further — no king of the forest, no line of descent, no homage of nations.

Alfred Edersheim, Bible History ⁴	Patriarchs and Prophets ⁵
“He is to be the leader, ‘the lion.’ As the lion is king of the forest, so was Judah to have royal sway, through David onwards to the Son of David, the Shiloh, unto Whom, as ‘the Lion of the tribe of Judah,’ all nations should render homage and obedience.”	“The lion, king of the forest, is a fitting symbol of this tribe, from which came David, and the Son of David, Shiloh, the true Lion of the tribe of Judah, to whom all powers shall finally bow and all nations render homage.”

Four elements, in the same order: the lion as king of the forest; the descent from David to the Son of David to Shiloh; the title *Lion of the tribe of Judah*; and the homage of the nations. It is not in her 1864 account. This is pure plagiarism from Edersheim with slight rewording.

3. “Exacted”

Genesis 47:29–31 says Jacob asked Joseph to put his hand under his thigh and swear. Both White and Edersheim choose the same extra-biblical word to describe this event:

Edersheim ⁶	Patriarchs and Prophets ⁷
“and he exacted an oath from his son to bury him with his fathers, in the cave of Machpelah.”	“he exacted a solemn oath to lay him beside his fathers in the cave of Machpelah.”

Neither the word *Exacted* or *oath* appears in the biblical passage. These are Edersheim's words. *Spiritual Gifts* does not use them.

4. Checking the Curse Against Numbers

This may be the most revealing example in the entire chapter because it is not an extra detail, a colorful description, or a moral lesson. It is a research step.

Jacob pronounces a curse upon Simeon and Levi, declaring that they will be divided and scattered in Israel. Genesis ends there. Anyone wishing to know whether the prophecy was fulfilled must leave Genesis altogether and search the biblical record.

That is exactly what Edersheim does.

Edersheim ⁸	Patriarchs and Prophets ⁹
“we know that even at the second numbering of Israel (Numbers 26:14), Simeon had sunk to be the smallest tribe.”	“At the numbering of Israel, just before their entrance to Canaan, Simeon was the smallest tribe.”

This is the second time we have seen Ellen White reproduce not merely a commentator's conclusion but his method. Earlier she followed the Columbian Bible's comparison of Genesis 5:1 and 5:3. Here she follows Edersheim's decision to verify Jacob's prophecy by consulting the census in Numbers.

Notice what has happened. Neither writer is describing Jacob's blessing. Both are interrupting the narrative to verify its fulfillment by consulting the census recorded in Numbers 26. Both arrive at the same observation: Simeon had become the smallest tribe in Israel.

That is not the sort of information a witness at Jacob's bedside would naturally report. It is the sort of information a Bible scholar discovers by following cross-references and comparing passages.

5. Mizpah: A Watchtower

Jacob and Laban part ways and seal their truce with a pillar of stones. Genesis 31:49 gives only the wordplay behind the name:

Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

The verse never actually states what the word means in English. Rather, it simply juxtaposes the name with a saying that sounds like it. Edersheim and White go beyond the biblical text with explanatory details:

Alfred Edersheim ¹⁰	Patriarchs and Prophets ¹¹
“Hypocritically as in the mouth of Laban the additional name of Mizpah sounds...For Mizpah means watchtower”...“Jehovah watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.””	“To this pillar Laban gave the name Mizpah, watchtower, saying, The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.”

Both writers supply the same English translation that the verse itself withholds, in the same place, attached to the same quotation. The meaning of Mizpah was reasonably common property in nineteenth-century Bible reference works, so it cannot be pinned to Edersheim specifically. However, it is a translation that neither Genesis nor *Spiritual Gifts* supplies, but Edersheim does.

Conclusion

None of these five examples are the sort of thing a witness at the scene would report, or a vision would need to supply. They are the marks of a writer working from a shelf of books, not a vision of the events themselves.

In the most devastating example, the caste system, the borrowing carried Edersheim's mistake along with his words. The claim that God directed White to the exact words to steal from other authors has been proven false. She copied mistakes along with truths.

The next chapter turns to a well-known source.

¹ Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1864), 161. Also in *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1 (1870), 146.

² Edersheim, *Bible History*, vol. 1, 83.

³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 228.

⁴ Alfred Edersheim, *The Bible History, Old Testament* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1876–80), vol. 1, 90.

⁵ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 235.

⁶ Edersheim, *Bible History*, vol. 1, 88.

⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 233.

⁸ Edersheim, *Bible History*, vol. 1, 89.

⁹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 235.

¹⁰ Edersheim, *Bible History*, vol. 1, 67.

¹¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 193.

8 ♦ Matthew Henry

Matthew Henry (1662–1714) was an English Nonconformist minister and preacher best known for his monumental work, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (commonly called Matthew Henry’s Commentary). Published in six volumes between 1708 and 1710, it became the most widely read, influential, and quoted devotional commentary in the English-speaking Protestant world throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Early Adventist authors, including James White, quoted from Henry in articles in the *Review*. It was a staple on the bookshelves of virtually every Protestant preacher, evangelist, and religious writer—including Ellen White—for generations.

Parallels to Matthew Henry

Following are several examples where Ellen White copied from Henry.

1. Tower of Babel as a Flood Shelter

Genesis 11:4 gives the builders two motives for constructing the tower: "let us make us a name," and "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Nothing is said about the purpose being to escape another flood.

The flood-escape theory is not in the Bible at all. The oldest surviving version appears in Josephus. This is not a revelation. This is an ancient legend. Josephus reported that Nimrod incited the builders and vowed that “he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach.”¹

The idea passed down through the centuries into the commentaries — where, by Matthew Henry's Day, it was mentioned but rejected.

Watch how Henry handles it:

Matthew Henry on Genesis 11 ²	Patriarchs and Prophets ³
"Some think they intended hereby to secure themselves against the waters of another flood. God had told them indeed that he would not again drown the world; but they would trust to a tower of their own making, rather than to a promise of God's making... If, however, they had had this in their eye, they would have chosen to build their tower upon a mountain rather than upon a plain."	"The dwellers on the plain of Shinar disbelieved God's covenant that He would not again bring a flood upon the earth... One object before them in the erection of the tower was to secure their own safety in case of another deluge. By carrying the structure to a much greater height than was reached by the waters of the Flood, they thought to place themselves beyond all possibility of danger."

Henry is careful. "*Some think...*" He is not reporting history; he is passing along an old conjecture — the very one Josephus had recorded — and he then proceeds to refute it. If the builders truly feared another Flood, he argues, they would have built on a mountain rather than on the plain of Shinar. Their choice of location undermines the theory.

Ellen White removes every trace of uncertainty. What Josephus offered as legend and Henry passed along as another man's speculation becomes, in her account, the builders' *actual* motive. They disbelieved God's covenant. They built the tower to survive another deluge — and, following the ancient logic exactly, they built it *higher than the floodwaters had reached*. The legend of Josephus has become revelation.

This creates a serious problem for the SDA defense that the Holy Spirit guided Ellen White to reliable commentators. She did not merely borrow the commentators' information—**she adopted the nonsensical legend that careful commentators were rejecting**. Henry questioned it. Other Bible commentators of White's era also flatly rejected it (Poole, Gill, Pulpit, and Ellicott who called it the "silly stories of Josephus.") If White had been guided by God in selecting materials, she too would

have rejected it. However, she did the exact opposite: elevating a legend into revealed history.

2. Not of His Head, Nor of His Feet

Genesis tells us where Eve came from. It does not tell us what the rib symbolizes. That application belongs to Matthew Henry, and it became one of the most celebrated paragraphs in his commentary.

Matthew Henry, on Genesis 2:22 ⁴	Patriarchs and Prophets ⁵
“That the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.”	“Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him.”

White follows Henry point for point: not the head, not the feet, the side, equality, protection, and love. Even Henry's rhetorical framework remains intact: *not this, nor that, but this*.

Nothing in Genesis suggests that the rib signifies equality, protection, or love. Those are theological applications. Henry made them famous. White repeats them as though they were revealed to her.

3. God Rested, Not as One Weary

Matthew Henry, on Genesis 2 ⁶	Patriarchs and Prophets ⁷
“He did not rest, as one weary, but as one well-pleased with the instances of his own goodness and the manifestations of his own glory.”	“and he rested, not as one weary, but as well pleased with the fruits of his wisdom and goodness and the manifestations of his glory.”

Here the plagiarism is scarcely disguised. Genesis says only that God rested on the Sabbath. The denial that the rest implied fatigue, the substitution of satisfaction for exhaustion, and the closing phrase about the manifestations of his glory are all Henry's, not a revelation.

4. Noah's Small Stock of Cattle

Genesis 8:20 says Noah built an altar and offered of every clean beast and fowl. It offers no commentary on the cost.

Matthew Henry, on Genesis 8:20 ⁸	Patriarchs and Prophets ⁹
“Though his stock of cattle was so small, and that rescued from ruin at so great an expense of care and pains, yet he did not grudge to give God his dues out of it.”	“His stock of cattle was small, and had been preserved at great expense; yet he cheerfully gave a part to the Lord as an acknowledgment that all was His.”

Small stock, great expense, and generosity notwithstanding — the same three-part observation, in the same order, about a verse that supplies none of it.

5. Charity Versus Gain

Genesis 14 gives us the facts: Lot is captured, Abram hears of it, arms 318 of his servants, pursues the enemy, and rescues his nephew. But Genesis never tells us *why* Abram went to war. It also says nothing about any lingering resentment between the two men. In Genesis 13, Abram had generously allowed Lot to choose the land he wanted, and the two simply went their separate ways. Henry and White both supply a backstory not in Genesis:

Matthew Henry, on Genesis 14:13–16 ¹⁰	Patriarchs and Prophets ¹¹
“We have here an account of the only military action we ever find Abram engaged in, and this he was prompted to, not by his avarice or ambition, but purely by a principle of charity.... Justly might Abram have upbraided Lot with his folly in quarrelling with him and removing from him...but, in the charitable breast of pious Abram, it is all forgiven and forgotten, and he takes this opportunity to give a real proof of the sincerity of his reconciliation.”	“He had cherished no unkind memory of Lot's ingratitude. All his affection for him was awakened, and he determined that he should be rescued...he would give them no occasion to think that he had engaged in warfare for the sake of gain, or to attribute his prosperity to their gifts or favor.”

According to Henry and White, Abram's rescue was not motivated by ambition or gain, but by charity. Also, before the

rescue, there was supposedly a grievance between Abram and Lot — Lot had quarreled with him, separated from him, and acted ungratefully. Yet Abram had forgiven and forgotten the offense.

None of this is in Genesis 14. The chapter never says that Abram rescued Lot to prove his charity, never says he was concerned about being perceived as seeking financial gain, and never calls Lot ungrateful. **Henry creates the backstory and the motive; White reproduces both.** Henry says it was “all forgiven and forgotten.” White says Abram had “cherished no unkind memory.” Henry says the rescue was driven by charity rather than gain; White says Abram wanted no one to think he fought for gain.

Henry supplies internal motives and moral interpretation to a story that never supplies either. Once again, the commentator's extra-biblical interpretation appears in *Patriarchs and Prophets* as though it were revealed history.

6. The Ladder Is Christ, and the Only Way Back

Genesis 28:12–15 describes Jacob's dream: a ladder reaching between earth and heaven, angels ascending and descending, and God speaking from above it. Genesis never identifies the ladder as Christ, nor does it explain the ladder as the restored channel of communication between fallen humanity and heaven.

Matthew Henry, on Genesis 28:12 ¹²	Patriarchs and Prophets ¹³
“He saw a ladder which reached from earth to heaven, the angels ascending and descending upon it, and God himself at the head of it. ... The mediation of Christ. He is this ladder, the foot on earth in his human nature, the top in heaven in his divine nature... All the intercourse between heaven and earth, since the fall, is by this ladder. We have no way of getting to heaven, but by this ladder. ... To this vision our Saviour alludes when he speaks of the angels of God ascending and	“...he beheld a ladder, bright and shining, whose base rested upon the earth, while the top reached to heaven. Upon this ladder angels were ascending and descending... The mystic ladder revealed to him in his dream was the same to which Christ referred in His conversation with Nathanael. Said He, “Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” John 1:51. ... The ladder represents Jesus, the appointed medium of communication... Had he not with his own merits bridged the gulf that sin had

Matthew Henry, on Genesis 28:12 ¹²	Patriarchs and Prophets ¹³
descending upon the son of man (John i. 51).”	made, the ministering angels could have held no communion with fallen man.”

The identification of the ladder with Christ is not, by itself, remarkable. Jesus himself connects the imagery of Jacob's ladder with the Son of man in John 1:51, and Henry explicitly makes that connection. The more interesting parallel is what both writers do with the idea afterward.

Henry says that Christ is the ladder through whom **all intercourse between heaven and earth, since the Fall** takes place. He calls Christ the only way to heaven and describes the ladder as the appointed connection between the two realms. *Patriarchs and Prophets* develops the same idea: Christ is the **appointed medium of communication**, and without His merits to **bridge the gulf that sin had made**, fallen humanity could have no communion with the angels.

Genesis says none of this. It gives Jacob a dream and a promise. John 1:51 supplies the Christian connection to Christ. But the elaborate explanation of the ladder as the divinely appointed bridge between heaven and fallen humanity comes from the commentator. *Patriarchs and Prophets* presents the same theological architecture as revealed truth.

The ladder comes from Genesis. The Christian interpretation comes from John. The explanation of what that ladder does for fallen humanity comes from Matthew Henry. White rearranged the wording.

7. The Anatomy of “The Literal Week”

Patriarchs and Prophets devotes an entire chapter, “The Literal Week,” to defending a literal six-day creation against two challenges: geology's evidence for an ancient earth and the newer claim that nature operates according to its own “fixed laws,” requiring no continuing divine activity. The opening defense against geology is carried forward almost unchanged from White's 1864 *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 3. It appears to draw

heavily on arguments already circulating in Adventist periodicals during the 1850s and early 1860s.¹⁴

But the chapter did not simply preserve White's earlier material. Two passages added later, both absent from the 1864 account, point toward two very different literary sources. The first leads backward more than a century to Matthew Henry. The second leads forward to a contemporary debate over Darwinism and materialism.

The Henry Proof Texts

The first addition is revealing because of the *exact combination* of biblical texts used to make the argument. Where the 1864 book strings together several passages about the inscrutability of God, *Patriarchs and Prophets* introduces Deuteronomy 29:29 and pairs it with Job 11:7–9—the same two passages Matthew Henry had already brought together for essentially the same point:¹⁵

Matthew Henry, on Romans 1:19 ¹⁶	Patriarchs and Prophets ¹⁷
“The being of God may be apprehended, but cannot be comprehended. We cannot by searching find him out, Job 11:7–9. Finite understandings cannot perfectly know an infinite being... and these things revealed belong to us and to our children, while secret things are not to be pried into, Deut. 29:29.”	“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever.” Deuteronomy 29:29. ... No finite mind can fully comprehend the existence, the power, the wisdom, or the works of the Infinite One. Says the sacred writer: “Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” Job 11:7–9.

The significance is not simply that both writers quote Scripture. It is that they select the *same two passages* and use them to construct the same argument about the limits of human understanding. Out of the many biblical texts available on God's incomprehensibility, the same two appear together in the same conceptual sequence.

The Rehash of *Signs of the Times*

On April 19, 1882, Charles Darwin died, and the American religious press spent the following weeks reacting. The Advent Christian author D. T. Taylor compiled excerpts from multiple

Protestant sources into a single column. *Signs of the Times* reprinted it on August 3, 1882. Read as a whole, the column makes a cumulative argument: Darwinism gives matter its own inherent energy, removes God's continuing activity from nature, reduces creation to a mechanism God merely started, and ultimately leaves no place for God within the workings of the universe.

Eighteen months later, Ellen White dived into the controversy with her own *Signs of the Times* article, "Science and the Bible in Education," published March 20, 1884. Her answer follows the same argument in the same sequence — and answers it point by point. That 1884 article was later carried into *Patriarchs and Prophets* with only light revision.

The 1882 catena (Signs of the Times, Aug. 3, 1882)¹⁸	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i>¹⁹
The Observer: "Darwin's theory is essentially materialistic, maintaining that there is an inherent energy in matter —at least in living matter—by which it tends to higher ends ."	"Many teach that matter possesses vital power —that certain properties are imparted to matter, and it is then left to act through its own inherent energy ."
The Observer: "It does not acknowledge the superintending care and power by which creatures are preserved and developed ."	"every breath, every pulsation of the heart, is an evidence of the all-pervading care of Him in whom 'we live, and move, and have our being.'"
The Interior: "His system has no place for God in any present energy , and the universe, if not without a creator, is certainly without any providential guide ."	"Nature testifies of an intelligence, a presence, an active energy , that works in and through her laws. There is in nature the continual working of the Father and the Son."
The Observer: "...it is adapted to a system which excludes all idea of God ."	"...operations of nature are conducted in harmony with fixed laws, with which God Himself cannot interfere . This is false science, and is not sustained by the word of God."
Illustrated Christian Weekly: "God started the world; that was all ."	"As regards this world, God's work of creation is completed...But His energy is still exerted in upholding the objects of His creation."
The Churchman: "A piece of hard, unyielding mechanism , which leaves no	" Nature is the servant of her Creator ...It is not because the

The 1882 catena (Signs of the Times, Aug. 3, 1882) ¹⁸	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ¹⁹
room for freedom, either divine or human; which puts God behind the machine, outside of nature. "	mechanism that has once been set in motion continues to act by its own inherent energy that the pulse beats and breath follows breath."

Taylor makes a single cumulative argument: matter has its own inherent energy; that energy does the work once attributed to God's superintending care; the result is a world God merely started and then left—a piece of hard mechanism with no room for Him inside it. White's answer follows the same sequence and reverses each point: matter's supposed vital power is rejected; breath and pulse become evidence of God's continuing care; creation is finished but God's energy is still exerted; and nature is declared the servant of its Creator rather than a self-acting machine.

The vocabulary is strikingly specific: *inherent energy*, *mechanism*, *present* or *active energy*, God's *superintending care*, and the question of whether God remains *inside* or *outside* nature. These are not concepts supplied by Genesis. They belong to a very specific nineteenth-century dialogue over Darwinism, materialism, and divine providence.

The significance is not that White merely addressed the same subject as other writers. Her 1884 response follows an argument already laid out in *Signs of the Times* in strikingly similar language and sequence. The material then moved into *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

That gives us a glimpse of how the supposedly revealed chapter was actually constructed. New material was added from different sources at different times: Matthew Henry supplied one layer; the contemporary *Signs of the Times* controversy supplied another. What finally appeared as a single chapter in *Patriarchs and Prophets* was, in fact, a composite built over time from earlier writings and existing arguments.

Whatever one ultimately believes about Ellen White's prophetic claims, the documentary evidence shows that the chapter evolved from earlier material.

Conclusion

Seven parallels are difficult to dismiss, especially because they are not merely shared biblical facts. Henry supplies interpretations that Genesis does not: Noah's small stock and great expense, the meaning of Adam's rib, Lot's forgiven resentment, the nature of God's rest, and the function of Jacob's ladder. *Patriarchs and Prophets* gives those same interpretations in remarkably similar form.

The Babel example stands out as the one that should give us pause. Henry says "some think" the builders feared another flood, then rejects the idea. White removes the hedge and presents the same legend as fact. **Henry questioned it; White revealed it.**

Matthew Henry was not claiming visions. He was reading, comparing, reasoning, and occasionally admitting that he did not know. That is what a commentator does. Material that Henry had already reasoned through appears in *Patriarchs and Prophets* as revealed history — uncredited.

¹ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, book 1, chapter 4. Josephus attributes the tower's construction to Nimrod, who is not named in the Genesis account. While the myth of the tower being built to "escape the flood" may have been popular in the among the people of the 1800s, modern scholars universally reject it (Westermann, Wenham, Sarna, Hamilton, Arnold, Hiebert, Goldingay, etc.).

² Matthew Henry, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, on Genesis 11.

³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 119.

⁴ Matthew Henry, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament* (London: W. Collins, 1860), on Genesis 2:21–25.

⁵ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 45.

⁶ Henry, *Exposition*, on Genesis 2:1–3.

⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 47.

⁸ Henry, *Exposition*, on Genesis 8:20–22.

⁹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 105.

¹⁰ Henry, *Exposition*, on Genesis 14:13–16.

¹¹ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 134.

¹² Henry, *Exposition*, on Genesis 28:12.

¹³ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 186.

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- ¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3 (1864), "Disguised Infidelity." See Uriah Smith's commentary on geology, Creation, and the Sabbath in various articles of the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 1858 - 1860.
- ¹⁵ Compare the proof texts used in *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3 (1864) for the incomprehensibility of God's works, none of which is Job 11:7-9.
- ¹⁶ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, on Romans 1:19-20.
- ¹⁷ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 112, 115.
- ¹⁸ "The Observer," quoted in D. T. Taylor, comp., *Signs of the Times*, Aug. 3, 1882. The catena of American religious weeklies reacting to Darwin's death (April 19, 1882) was originally compiled by Taylor for the *Advent Christian Bible Banner* before being reprinted in *Signs*. "The Observer" is almost certainly the *New York Observer*; the original 1882 printing has not been located in any digitized archive as of this writing.
- ¹⁹ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 114-115; see also, *Signs of the Times*, March 20, 1884.

9 ♦ William Hanna

William Hanna (1808–1882) was an Irish-born Scottish Presbyterian minister, theologian, and author. Hanna occupies a unique place among Ellen White’s literary sources. His *Life of Christ* has long been recognized as one of the principal books behind Marian Davis’ *The Desire of Ages*. But Hanna also wrote a lesser-known Old Testament commentary, *The Patriarchs* (1879), covering Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. That book was in Ellen White’s library.

Parallels with Hanna

Hanna is important because he does more than provide occasional wording. He supplies new pieces of the story — chronology, motives, settings, and even the circumstances in which biblical characters received divine direction. These details are absent from Ellen White’s 1864 account but appear in the expanded *Patriarchs and Prophets* of 1890, after Hanna’s book was available to her.

1. Bethel

Hanna’s wording about Abraham’s first encampment at Bethel is remarkably close to White’s:

William Hanna, <i>The Patriarchs</i> , 1879	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> , 1890
Bethel. “It was here that, 120 years before, his grandfather had made his first halt and reared his first altar in the Land of Promise.” ¹	“It was here that Abraham, more than a hundred years before, had made his first encampment and erected his first altar in the Land of Promise.” ²

Genesis does not give this chronology. It simply says that Abraham built an altar at Bethel. Hanna supplies the historical calculation and the description of Abraham’s first encampment. Eleven years later, White gives essentially the same detail, with the same opening and closing words, and the same sequence.

2. Abraham’s Call

Hanna also describes what Abraham had to overcome when God called him:

William Hanna, <i>The Patriarchs</i> , 1879	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> , 1890
“It had been strong enough to break the ties that bound him to country, home, and kindred.” ³	“There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home.” ⁴

Genesis records the command to leave, but it does not describe Abraham’s emotional struggle with the ties of home and family. Hanna does. *Patriarchs and Prophets* then gives the same idea in nearly the same language.

3. A Vision of the Night

William Hanna, <i>The Patriarchs</i> , 1879	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> , 1890
Command to sacrifice Isaac. “It is in a dream or vision of the night the command comes.” ⁵	“In a vision of the night he was directed...” ⁶

This one deserves special attention. Genesis tells us that God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac, but it does not tell us *how* the command was delivered. Hanna supplies the setting: a dream or “vision of the night.” White later supplies the same detail.

Genesis does not say it. White does not say it in 1864. Hanna says it in 1879. White adds it in 1890.

4. In Egypt

William Hanna, <i>The Patriarchs</i> , 1879	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> , 1890
Concern about mixing with idolatrous Egyptians. “Joseph’s anxiety now was to secure to his people	“...would enable them to remain a distinct and separate people and would

William Hanna, <i>The Patriarchs</i> , 1879	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> , 1890
a separate settlement in Egypt, where they would not be mingled with the idolatrous Egyptians.” ⁷	thus serve to shut them out from participation in the idolatry of Egypt.” ⁸
Jacob in Egypt. “These closing years in Egypt offer a striking contrast to those which preceded them.” ⁹	“These years were in happy contrast to those that had preceded them.” ¹⁰

Neither detail is stated in Genesis. Hanna explains why Joseph wanted the family kept separate from Egyptian idolatry, then describes Jacob’s final years in Egypt as a contrast to the years before them. *Patriarchs and Prophets* supplies both ideas in essentially the same form.

Conclusion

Taken separately, each addition might be dismissed as an author's interpretation. Taken together, the pattern is harder to explain: **Hanna supplies the chronology, the emotional struggle, the circumstances of a revelation, the concern over Egyptian idolatry, and the evaluation of Jacob’s final years. White's expanded account contains the same additions after Hanna's book was available.**

The chronology is difficult to ignore. In 1864, these details are absent. Hanna's *The Patriarchs* appears in 1879. In 1890, the same details appear in White's book.

¹ William Hanna and J. P. Norris, *The Patriarchs* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1879), 119. The book was first released in London in late 1878, but appeared in America in 1879, hence the 1879 publication date.

² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 203.

³ Hanna, *The Patriarchs*, 39.

⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 125.

⁵ Hanna, *The Patriarchs*, 38.

⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 147.

⁷ J.P. Norris, *The Patriarchs*, 165.

⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 232.

⁹ Hanna, *The Patriarchs*, 130.

¹⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 233.

10 ♦ Cunningham Geikie

John Cunningham Geikie (1824–1906) was a Scottish-born minister, theologian, and author. Celebrated as one of the late 19th century’s most popular evangelical writers, Geikie specialized in vivid, historical, and culture-rich retellings of biblical history. His primary works include the best-selling two-volume *The Life and Words of Christ* (1877) and the extensive ten-volume Old Testament series *Hours with the Bible* (1881–1884). Geikie’s books were found in Ellen White's library and served as a major uncredited literary source for her Conflict of the Ages series.

Parallels to Geikie

By now the pattern scarcely needs repeating. New books appear. New "revelations" follow.

1. Led Outside His Tent

Genesis 15:5 says only:

And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them.

The verse simply says God brought Abraham outside.

Cunningham Geikie, <i>Hours with the Bible</i> ¹	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ²
“for, presently, he seemed, in the vision, to be led outside his tent, and told to look up at the countless stars,	“Then he was led outside his tent, and told to look up to the unnumbered stars glittering in the heavens.”

Cunningham Geikie, <i>Hours with the Bible</i> ¹	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ²
glittering in the brightness of a Syrian sky.”	

Geikie has Abraham *led outside his tent*, told to *look up*, at the *glittering* stars. White has Abraham *led outside his tent*, told to *look up*, at the *glittering* stars. Only two words have changed: *countless* becomes *unnumbered*, and *at* becomes *to*.

More significant still is Geikie's own language. He is not claiming to know what happened. He is reconstructing the scene for his readers: "*he seemed...*" In other words, this is an author's imagination at work, filling in details Scripture never supplies.

Geikie invites the reader to *imagine* the moment. White presents his figment as *revelation*.

2. Two Parallels, One Paragraph

The next example is even harder to dismiss as coincidence. Two separate parallels appear in a single paragraph of Geikie. Both reappear together in a single paragraph of *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

Cunningham Geikie (1886) ³	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> (1890) ⁴
“Abraham soon found that increased wealth brought increased troubles.”	“They soon found that increased possessions brought increased trouble.”
“Though the whole country had been given him by God Himself, he waived his rights.”	“Although the whole land had been given him by God himself, he courteously waived this right.”

The first sentence is a complete hijack: "*increased wealth brought increased troubles*." White preserves both the construction and the thought, changing only *wealth* to *possessions*.

The second is even stronger. White only makes minor adjustments to the wording. The sentence, its order, and its thought remain essentially untouched.

Neither observation comes from Genesis. One is a literary expression; the other is an author's commentary on Abraham's

character. Both migrate from the same paragraph of Geikie into the same paragraph of *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

3. Three More

None of these phrases comes from Genesis. All three are Geikie's editorial observations, and all three reappear in *Patriarchs and Prophets* with only minor verbal changes.

Cunningham Geikie, 1886	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> , 1890
The twins. “Jacob and Esau, the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah... present a striking contrast, alike in character and ultimate fortune.” ⁵	“Jacob and Esau, the twin sons of Isaac, present a striking contrast, both in character and in life.” ⁶
Joseph before Pharaoh. “but its correctness was so instantly apparent, and the policy recommended so sound and shrewd, that the result was not for a moment doubtful.” ⁷	“The interpretation was so reasonable and consistent, and the policy which it recommended was so sound and shrewd, that its correctness could not be doubted.” ⁸
Leaving Canaan. “But Canaan offered no facilities for the development of” a nation. ⁹	“And the land of Canaan now offered no field for the development of such a nation as had been foretold.” ¹⁰

Conclusion

Geikie repeatedly supplies what Genesis does not: the setting, the psychology, the motives, the character judgments, and the literary details that make the biblical narrative come alive. Years later, those same details appear in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, often with only cosmetic changes in wording.

But the most revealing difference is not the wording. It is the authority. Geikie openly tells his readers when he is reconstructing a scene. He writes that Abraham “seemed” to be led outside his tent. White removes the qualifier and presents the same scene as something she was shown.

The commentator says, “he seemed.” The prophet says, “he was.”

That is the issue. The question is not whether Ellen White could have described these scenes. She could. The question is

why details absent from Scripture, already supplied by a book in her library, later appear in her writings as revealed history.

Geikie supplied the imagination. Ellen White supplied the revelation — without citing the *human mind* she sourced it from.

¹ Cunningham Geikie, *Hours with the Bible* (New York: James Pott & Co., 1886), 262.

² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 136.

³ Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, 284.

⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 131.

⁵ Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, 320.

⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 176.

⁷ Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, 364.

⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 220.

⁹ Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, 342.

¹⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 231.

11 ♦ The Book of Jasher

Amazing Facts — a ministry operated by SDAs — markets Ellen White's *Patriarchs and Prophets* as a book with "unusual insights."¹ In their January 1998 newsletter, SDA minister Doug Batchelor quotes a statement made by Ellen White in *Patriarchs and Prophets* that could certainly be considered "unusual":

The builders [of the Tower of Babel] were wholly unable to account for the strange misunderstandings among them, and in their rage and disappointment they reproached one another. Their confederacy ended in strife and bloodshed. Lightnings from heaven, as an evidence of God's displeasure, broke off the upper portion of the tower and cast it to the ground.²

How unusual indeed! The Bible says nothing about strife and bloodshed at Babel. Kitto's *Cyclopedia* — a reference work in White's library — teaches that the confusion of tongues “produced discord and separation” among the builders.³ But discord is not bloodshed. No respected commentary in Ellen White's day carried the story that far. For that, we must turn to a very different kind of book.

In 1625, Jewish scholars in Venice printed the *Book of Jasher* (or *Sefer ha-Yashar*) in Hebrew.⁴ An English translation, marketed to the uneducated as an authentic ancient record, was published in New York in 1840 and quickly gained popularity in nineteenth-century America as an intriguing — and no doubt *unusual* — commentary on Old Testament history.

The book is not the ancient record its title claims. Nearly all scholars agree it was most likely composed in Spain around the twelfth century A.D. Goodspeed and other scholars believe its author compiled genuinely old Jewish traditions, called Midrash, some dating back to around the time of Christ, and supplemented them with fabrications of his own.⁵

Ellen White was not the only nineteenth-century self-proclaimed prophet misled by it: Joseph Smith also appears to have drawn on the *Book of Jasher*, defending it as a source that had “not been disproved as a bad author.”⁶

When one opens Jasher and turns to the story of Babel, the passage sounds hauntingly familiar to White's *unusual* account:

33. And from that day following, they forgot each man his neighbor's tongue, and they could not understand to speak in one tongue, and when the builder took from the hands of his neighbor lime or stone which he did not order, the builder would cast it away and throw it upon his neighbor, **that he would die.**

34. And they did so many days, and **they killed many of them in this manner.**

38. And as to the tower which the sons of men built...**a fire also descended from heaven** and burned another third...

39. And many of the sons of men died in that tower, a people without number.⁷

Jasher said the strife turned into bloodshed. White said the strife turned to bloodshed. Jasher said fire descended from heaven upon the tower. White said lightning struck the tower. That is an *unusual* coincidence.

Jasher: An Unusual Book

The *Book of Jasher* is filled with colorful expansions of the Genesis narrative that appear in almost no other book available to Ellen White. Where an extra-biblical detail appears in *Jasher*

and in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, but not in Genesis and not in the standard commentaries, the parallel deserves attention.

There is another reason *Jasher* is significant. Unlike the respected commentaries examined earlier, this book carried no recognized historical authority. Its claim to be the ancient "Book of Jasher" mentioned in Scripture was widely disputed, and many scholars regarded it as little more than a collection of fables — not without reason. The book has Noah's generation watching snow fall before the Flood, a wolf holding a conversation with Jacob, fifteen plagues on Egypt instead of ten, Rachel speaking to Joseph from beyond the grave, and a man slaying a creature that was half man and half beast.⁸ Unusual insights, indeed!

While this book does not appear in any known inventory of Ellen White's libraries, early Adventists — including James White — cited it repeatedly during the 1850s as though it were a legitimate historical source.⁹ If the book was merely a collection of legends, one might expect God's prophetess to have warned early Adventists against using it. She never did. Even though she repeatedly denounced works of fiction, Ellen White remained silent while Adventist leaders treated the book as a credible source of biblical history. If James had access to it, cited it, and regarded it as reliable, there is little doubt that Ellen also encountered the book. **Especially when so many of the *unusual* details that later appeared in her writings were already found in its pages.**

Parallels to Jasher

A caution belongs at the outset. Unlike the Geikie parallels, these are not verbal borrowings. They are shared *ideas* — the same extra-biblical traditions expressed in different words. Most already appear in *Spiritual Gifts* (1864) and are simply carried into *Patriarchs and Prophets*. The force of the evidence is therefore cumulative: one unusual legend may prove little; a succession of distinctive legends pointing toward the same unusual source is another matter.

1. Fire From Heaven Consumed Abel's Sacrifice

Genesis 4:4 says only that “the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering.” It gives no visible sign of that acceptance at all — no fire, no flame, nothing an onlooker could have seen.

Book of Jasher 1:15 ¹⁰	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ¹¹
“God turned and inclined to Abel and his offering, and a fire came down from the Lord from heaven and consumed it.”	“The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering.” Fire flashed from heaven and consumed the sacrifice.”

2. Enoch's Angelic Visitation, Withdrawal, and the Awe Upon His Face

Genesis says only that Enoch *walked with God; and he was not; for God took him* (Genesis 5:24). Twelve words. From this, both Jasher and Ellen White construct the same elaborate portrait: a man who first received his extraordinary knowledge through an angelic visitor, then alternated between solitude and public teaching on a fixed rhythm, and whose face shone with a radiance so awe-inspiring that people were afraid to approach him.

Genesis nowhere identifies how Enoch came by his knowledge of coming judgment. Jasher supplies an angel as the messenger:

And it was at the expiration of many years, whilst he was serving the Lord, and praying before him in his house, that an **angel** of the Lord called to him from Heaven, and he said, Here am I.¹²

Patriarchs and Prophets supplies the identical mechanism, and the identical content revealed through it:

Through holy **angels** God revealed to Enoch His purpose to destroy the world by a flood, and He also opened more fully to him the plan of redemption.¹³

From there, both texts move to the same withdrawal-and-radiance portrait:

Book of Jasher 3:17–20 ¹⁴	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ¹⁵
“he did not entirely secrete himself... but kept away from the sons of men three days and then went to them for one day... and appeared to his people one day in seven; and after that once in a month, and then once in a year... they feared to approach him on account of the Godlike awe that was seated upon his countenance. ”	“he would withdraw, to spend a season in solitude ... His face was radiant with a holy light... even the ungodly beheld with awe the impress of heaven upon his countenance. ”

Three distinct non-biblical ideas appear together, and in the same sequence, in both accounts: an angel as the medium of revelation, the periodic alternation between seclusion and public teaching, and the awe-inspiring radiance on Enoch's face that made people afraid to come near him. None of the three is in Genesis. None is found in this combined form in any of the standard commentaries examined for this study.

3. The Multitude Stormed the Ark and Begged to Enter

Genesis records only that *the Lord shut him in* (Genesis 7:16). There is no crowd. There are no pleas. Yet both Jasher and Ellen White stage the same dramatic scene: a desperate multitude besieging the ark, begging Noah for entry, and met with divine silence.

Book of Jasher 6:17–23 ¹⁶	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ¹⁷
“they came unto Noah to the ark. And they called to Noah saying, open for us that we may come to thee in the ark... [Noah answered] the Lord will not listen to you, neither will he give ear to you on this day. ”	“Others were frantic with fear, stretching their hands toward the ark and pleading for admittance. But their entreaties were in vain... They called upon Him earnestly, but His ear was not open to their cry. ”

The scene is entirely extra-biblical: the crowd at the door, the plea for entrance, and the pointed detail that God *would not hear* their cry. No other book examined in this study portrays this confrontation.

4. More of the Same Pattern

The remaining parallels contain shared ideas that also surface, in some form, in other sources. Regardless of the actual source she used, in each case White picks up concepts and ideas that are absent from the Genesis text itself.

The extra-biblical detail	Book of Jasher	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets / Spiritual Gifts</i>
Pre-Flood idol-worship. Organized image-worship inserted into the antediluvian age.	“the sons of men made images of brass and iron, wood and stone, and they bowed down and served them” ¹⁸	“worshiped the works of their own hands, and taught their children to bow down to graven images... set up the altars of their idols” ¹⁹
Enoch the preacher and reprove. Enoch as an active public teacher who instructed and reprove.	“he taught them wisdom and knowledge, and gave them instruction , and he reproved them” ²⁰	“Enoch became a preacher of righteousness... He was a fearless reprover of sin” ²¹
The 120 years as conditional probation. The delay was a reprieve during which repentance could cancel judgement.	“if you will turn to me and forsake your evil ways, then will I also turn away from the evil ... God repent of the evil, so as not to destroy the earth” ²²	“Had the antediluvians believed the warning, and repented... the Lord would have turned aside His wrath , as He afterward did from Nineveh” ²³
Noah and Methuselah as joint preachers. The specific pairing of Methuselah alongside Noah.	“ Noah and Methuselah spoke all the words of the Lord to the sons of men, day after day” ²⁴	“ Methuselah, Noah , and many others labored to keep alive the knowledge of the true God” ²⁵
Unprecedented thunder and lightning. A terrifying storm, never before seen, that frightened the wicked.	“the lightning flashed, and the thunder roared ... such as was not known to the inhabitants before ... in order to terrify the sons of men” ²⁶	“the muttering of thunder and the flash of lightning ... The world had never witnessed anything like this , and the hearts of men were struck with fear” ²⁷
The animals' cries of terror. The beasts within the ark audibly terrified during the storm.	“the living creatures that were in the ark were terrified , and the lions roared, and the oxen lowed, and the wolves howled” ²⁸	“The cries of the beasts within expressed their fear and pain . But amid the warring elements it continued to ride safely” ²⁹

None of these details are in Genesis. Each appears in Jasher and in White's telling. They demonstrate a consistent pattern of copying legendary material into her *inspired* pre-Flood narrative.

5. Amalgamation of Man and Beast

Not every borrowed idea survived. Some proved too costly to keep. The clearest example is the doctrine of *amalgamation* — the claim that before the Flood, the races of men and beasts had mixed and produced amalgamated offspring.

In a legend from the *Book of Jasher*, the antediluvian's practice of amalgamation is spelled out:

The sons of men in those days took from the cattle of the earth, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and taught the mixture of animals of one species with the other.³⁰

Little known to Ellen White, ancient people could not cross-breed completely different kinds of animals. The biological barriers between different species make such breeding impossible, and viable offspring cannot be produced. With only a third-grade education, White could not have known this. And, apparently, the spirit guides helping her write the book missed this one as well.

In *Spiritual Gifts* (1864), Ellen White picked up the concept and stated it twice, and without hedging. It was, she wrote, the *chief* reason the Flood was sent:

But if there was one sin above another which called for the destruction of the race by the flood, it was the base crime of *amalgamation of man and beast* which defaced the image of God, and caused confusion everywhere.³¹

She even extended it past the Flood, to explain the variety of living things — and, notoriously, “certain races of men”:

Since the flood there has been *amalgamation of man and beast*, as may be seen in the almost endless varieties of species of animals, and in certain races of men.³²

The statement caused immediate difficulty. It appeared to be teaching that some human beings were the offspring of humans and animals, and the sect was forced to defend it. Uriah Smith devoted an entire article in the *Review* to the task, arguing that

the “confused species” referred not to the Black race — as was taught by some scientists of that era — but to “the wild Bushmen of Africa, some tribes of the Hottentots, and perhaps the Digger Indians of our own country, &c.”³³ His answer raised as many questions as it settled.

The statements were carried into her 1870 book, *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, but twenty years later, when the same material was expanded and rewritten as *Patriarchs and Prophets*, the entire subject of **amalgamation** was removed from the book. Instead of amalgamation of man and beast defacing the image of God and bringing judgment upon the antediluvian world, she wrote that “**polygamy**” was one of the sins “that brought the wrath of God upon the antediluvian world” and defaced “the image of God in man.”³⁴

Amalgamation was stated as revealed truth in 1864. This is exactly why people bought her books. They wanted freshly revealed truth. They wanted a *behind the scenes* view of biblical events. They wanted answers to their questions. They wanted to know what triggered God to send the deluge and what caused the different races of men. Ellen White had the answers — revealed to her in dreams and visions, or so they had been led to believe. However, those answers were wrong. They were not revealed by God. They were revealed by *Jasher*.

The amalgamation statements proved to be an embarrassment for the sect and they quietly vanished from *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Not all SDAs were pleased with the removal of what they thought to be inspired words. They pressed the Whites for an explanation. After all, what *prophet of God* has to delete their words? W.C. White responded to the complaints in full damage-control mode:

Regarding the two paragraphs which are to be found in *Spiritual Gifts* and also in *The Spirit of Prophecy* regarding amalgamation and the reason why they were left out of the later books... They were left out by Ellen G. White. ...she had many times direct instruction from the angel of the Lord regarding what should be omitted and what should be added in new editions.³⁵

Willie takes his mother's terrible blunder — an obvious false statement derived from a legend — and spins its removal as a miracle! An angel of the Lord directed her to remove it. Willie never explained why it took twenty-six years for the angel to get around to telling her to remove it.

Conclusion

There can be no doubt that Ellen White had “unusual insight” into Old Testament events. The question is where her unconventional insight came from. The evidence suggests that some of her most *unusual* additions were taken from the *Book of Jasher* — a spurious work masquerading as ancient history and filled with legendary embellishments. Thus, fiction — which she so routinely condemned — became a permanent fixture in the book she claimed was “truth...barricaded by a ‘thus saith the Lord.’”

¹ Amazing Facts Book Store,

<https://www.afbookstore.com/products/illustrated-patriarchs-and-prophets-hardcover-by-ellen-white>, extracted Sep. 5, 2026.

² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 119. This passage was quoted in: “The Last Tower of Babel,” January 1, 1998, <https://www.amazingfacts.org/news-events/inside-report/the-last-tower-of-babel/>, extracted Sep. 5, 2026. The passage also appears in White's earlier books *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 96, and *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, 92, where lightning is mentioned. Anger between the workers is also mentioned but not bloodshed.

³ John Kitto, ed., *A Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*, vol. 3 (1858), s.v. “Tongues, Confusion of.”

⁴ On the 1625 Venice printing of the Hebrew text, see the publisher's preface to *Book of Jasher* (New York: M. M. Noah & A. S. Gould, 1840).

⁵ Edgar J. Goodspeed, *Modern Apocrypha* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956), and related scholarship on the medieval Sefer ha-Yashar tradition.

⁶ Joseph Smith, cited in discussions of Latter-day Saint use of the *Book of Jasher*; Smith defended it as a source that had “not been disproved as a bad author.”

⁷ *Book of Jasher* (New York: M. M. Noah & A. S. Gould, 1840), chapter 9.

⁸ The details are drawn respectively from *Book of Jasher* 3:38 (snow before the flood); 43:40–46 (the wolf and Jacob); the fifteen plagues of Egypt narrated across chapters 78–81 (against the ten of Exodus 7–12);

42:30–41 (Rachel speaking from the grave); and 61:15 (Zepho and the half-man, half-beast creature).

⁹ See James White, *Advent Review*, Sep. 1850, 6; *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 6, 1852, 8; Jan. 20, 1853, 141; Uriah Smith, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Sep. 8, 1859, 123.

¹⁰ *Book of Jasher*, 1:15.

¹¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 71.

¹² *Book of Jasher*, 3:3.

¹³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 85.

¹⁴ *Book of Jasher*, 3:17–20.

¹⁵ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 86.

¹⁶ *Book of Jasher*, 6:17–23.

¹⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 100.

¹⁸ *Book of Jasher*, 2:4–5.

¹⁹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 90–91.

²⁰ *Book of Jasher*, 3:26.

²¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 86.

²² *Book of Jasher*, 5:8, 11.

²³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 97.

²⁴ *Book of Jasher*, 5:9.

²⁵ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 94.

²⁶ *Book of Jasher*, 6:11.

²⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 99.

²⁸ *Book of Jasher*, 6:28–30.

²⁹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 100.

³⁰ *Book of Jasher*, 4:18. The *Book of Jubilees* 5:1–2 also discusses amalgamation: "The angels of the Lord...saw that they [daughters of men] were beautiful to look at. So they married of them whomever they chose. They gave birth to children for them and they were giants. Wickedness increased on the earth. All animate beings corrupted their way — (every one of them) from people to cattle, animals, birds, and everything that moves about on the ground. All of them corrupted their way and their prescribed course." The concept is also found in the Midrash: "The sons of God saw the daughters of men ... and took them wives, whomsoever they chose. That was the reason they were obliterated from the earth. The animals, likewise, copulated with species other than their own: the horse with the ass, the ass with the horse, and the serpent with the bird, as it is said: And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Notice that Scripture does not say in this verse 'all man' but all flesh. Therefore, He blotted out every living substance which was upon the face of the ground, both man and cattle." (Tanchuma Noah 12, 500–800 AD).

³¹ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 64.

³² *Ibid.*, 75.

³³ Uriah Smith, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 31, 1866.

³⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 338.

³⁵ W.C. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, 452.

12 ♦ Book in Andrews' Library

In 1853, thirty-seven years before *Patriarchs and Prophets* and eleven years before its predecessor *Spiritual Gifts*, a small book was printed in Rochester, New York — the very town where the Adventist press and its founders were then gathered. Its title was *The World: As It Was, Is and Will Be*, and its author was an Adventist known only as A. C. Judson. A copy sat in the library of J. N. Andrews, one of the movement's pioneers.¹ Not only was the book possessed by Andrews, but he was known to have lent Ellen White at least one other book whose ideas crept into her *Spiritual Gifts*: John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.²

Judson offers curious extra-biblical details that seemed to have found their way into White's Creation and Flood chapters.

1. No Swamps in Eden?

Genesis says nothing about swamps in the unfallen earth. Judson supplied it — and so, in similar words, did White.

<i>The World: As It Was</i> ³	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ⁴
“Beauty and utility crowned every portion of God's sublime creation. We find no account of poisonous weeds or pestilential swamps. But there were trees of every variety, that were 'pleasant to the sight and good for food,' covered with luxuriant foliage — Fields, adorned with the richest verdure... There too was the choice vine and fragrant flowers.”	“It was exceedingly beautiful...produced a luxuriant growth of verdure. There were no loathsome swamps or barren deserts. Graceful shrubs and delicate flowers greeted the eye at every turn. The heights were crowned with trees more majestic than any that now exist.”

Judson's imagination of a world without “pestilential swamps” becomes White's vision of a world without “loathsome

swamps.” The idea that the unfallen earth contained no swamps at all is a curious, specific claim — not drawn from Scripture, and not the sort of detail one would expect two writers would independently invent.

Describing pre-Fall wetlands or marshes as "loathsome swamps" reflects a nineteenth-century Victorian cultural bias rather than an accurate biblical perspective. In modern ecology, wetlands are among the most essential, biodiverse, and life-supporting ecosystems on Earth, not "loathsome" defects caused by sin.

2. The Continual Degeneration of the Race

Judson's book contains the same doctrine that would later draw fire when White published it: that humanity has been physically shrinking since Eden.

<i>The World: As It Was</i>	<i>Spiritual Gifts, vol. 3 / 4a</i>
“he has been continually degenerating... a continual degeneration also in the size and strength of the human family. We read of the giants of ancient times... races that were exceedingly 'tall and strong'... But the majority of mankind now existing are of a diminutive stature and comparatively feeble.” ⁵	“Those who lived before the flood... were more than twice as tall as men now living upon the earth... The generations after the flood were less in stature. There was a continual decrease through successive generations, down to the last that lived upon the earth.” ⁶
“the seeds of disease and death were introduced into the human system, which have been transmitted to every successive generation... disease and deformity have been transmitted through each successive generation, and have marred his original beauty.” ⁷	“Wickedness and disease have increased with every successive generation... Many marvel that the human race have so degenerated, physically, mentally, and morally... it is the violation of God's constitution and laws, and the violation of the laws of health, that has produced this sad degeneracy.” ⁸

The doctrine is identical: a primeval race of great stature, followed by a steady, generation-by-generation shrinking down to the feeble men of the present. When White published this in 1864, it was promptly attacked. Uriah Smith rose to defend her in the *Review*, claiming to have seen reports of ancient of giants.⁹

When *Patriarchs and Prophets* was published in 1890, White softened her unconventional teaching of Adam being "more than twice as tall" to: "Adam's height was much greater than that of men who now inhabit the earth."¹⁰ Regardless of the accuracy of White's statement, it was not a unique revelation.

3. Probationary Immortality

Genesis never says Adam was created mortal, nor that immortality depended upon repeatedly eating from the tree of life. Yet both Judson and Ellen White build their entire Eden narrative on precisely that theological framework. It is one of the defining doctrines of Adventism: conditional immortality.

The extra-biblical idea	<i>The World: As It Was</i>	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets / Spiritual Gifts</i>
The tree of life provided a conditional or probationary existence. If obedient, man could retain life by eating from the tree of life.	"Man was not made to die. Although not immortal in his first constitution which would of course have rendered him incapable of dying, the seeds of death were not in him. He was a probationer for immortality, and had he been obedient , would no doubt have eaten of the tree of life from which he was afterwards excluded, and lived forever." ¹¹	"The dwellers in Eden had been placed upon probation ; their happy estate could be retained only on condition of fidelity to the Creator's law. They could obey and live, or disobey and perish... Immortality was promised them on condition of obedience ; by transgression they would forfeit eternal life. ... In order to possess an endless existence, man must continue to partake of the tree of life ." ¹²

This is a shared theological system. Probation, conditional immortality, obedience as the condition of continued life, and the tree of life as the means by which immortality was sustained are not isolated ideas—they are the structural framework of both accounts. Genesis supplies only the tree. The rest is theological construction.

Conclusion

Whether Judson was Ellen White's direct source for this developing Adventist theology can be debated. Other Adventist writers were already discussing Adam's probationary status in

the 1850s.¹³ But that actually strengthens the larger point. The architecture of White's Eden narrative is not found in Genesis, nor did it suddenly appear with her visions. The ideas were already circulating in the theological world around her.

Genesis supplies the garden. Early Adventist writers supplied the theology. Ellen White presented it as revelation.

¹ A. C. Judson, *The World: As It Was, Is and Will Be* (Rochester, N.Y.: Darrow, 1853). A copy was held in the library of J. N. Andrews.

² Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1969), 16.

³ Judson, *The World: As It Was*, 11.

⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 44.

⁵ Judson, *The World: As It Was*, 21, 39.

⁶ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 84.

⁷ Judson, *The World: As It Was*, 21, 39.

⁸ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4a (1864), 123.

⁹ Uriah Smith, "The Visions--Objections Answered," *Review and Herald*, vol. 28, no. 3 (July 3, 1866): 34. Without citing any sources, Smith wrote about the "discovery of organic remains, sufficient to show beyond a sane doubt, that at some period in the past, there existed on this earth a class of gigantic men and animals, in comparison with which the present species are but pygmies."

¹⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 45.

¹¹ Judson, *The World: As It Was*, 23.

¹² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 53, 60.

¹³ Uriah Smith, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 13, 1858, 204: "The question is often asked. Was Adam created mortal or immortal? And this reasoning has been adopted on the subject: If he was immortal he could not have died; so the sentence of death would have been a nullity. But if he was mortal he would have died necessarily; so the sentence would have involved no change of condition. Therefore it is concluded that he was neither, but on a probationary ground, just between mortality and immortality." See also, James. M. Stephenson, *The Atonement* (1854), 90; John Norton Loughborough, *An Examination of the Scripture Testimony* (1855), 36.

13 ♦ Adam Clarke

Adam Clarke (c. 1762–1832) was a British Methodist theologian, biblical scholar, and linguist, best known for compiling a monumental, eight-volume commentary on the Bible, published between 1810 and 1826. A close associate of Methodism's founder, John Wesley, Clarke spent over forty years writing his commentary single-handedly. Celebrated for its mastery of ancient languages, his commentary became a standard reference work across the nineteenth-century Protestant world and was listed in the inventory of Ellen White's library.

Parallels to Clarke

1. Reuben's Forfeited Birthright

Genesis 49:3–4 records Jacob's words to Reuben but says nothing about what became of his tribe in later history. Clarke supplies that history — quoting from the Targum to explain that Reuben forfeited three distinct privileges, which passed to three other sons, and then following the biblical threads showing that the tribe consequently sank into obscurity. Ellen White reproduces both his three-fold division and his verdict on the tribe.

Adam Clarke, on Genesis 49:3–4 ¹	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ²
“The Targums of Jonathan ben Jjzziel and Jerusalem add: 'But because thou hast sinned, the birthright is given to Joseph, the kingdom to Judah, and the priesthood to Levi.'” ... This tribe never rose to any eminence in Israel; was not	“...his grievous sin at Edar had made him unworthy of the birthright blessing. ... The priesthood was apportioned to Levi, the kingdom and the Messianic promise to Judah, and the double portion of the inheritance to Joseph.

Adam Clarke, on Genesis 49:3–4 ¹	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ²
so numerous by one third as either Judah, Joseph, or Dan, when Moses took the sum of them in the wilderness, Num. i. 21 and was among the first that were carried into captivity, 1 Chron. v. 26.”	The tribe of Reuben never rose to any eminence in Israel; it was not so numerous as Judah, Joseph, or Dan, and was among the first that were carried into captivity.”

Genesis stops with Jacob's pronouncement: "thou shalt not excel." Clarke follows the story into Israel's later history, explaining how Reuben's forfeited privileges were divided among Levi, Judah, and Joseph. White adopts the same framework, then concludes with Clarke's historical verdict that Reuben's tribe never attained prominence.

2. Simeon and Levi: The Forty-Eight Cities

The next parallel comes from a single note in which Clarke traces the later fortunes of *both* Simeon and Levi. Genesis 49:7 says only that the two would be “divided” and “scattered” in Israel. Clarke explains *how* the scattering played out for each tribe. White compresses his entire note — keeping his distinctive details and even his phrasing.

Adam Clarke, on Genesis 49:7 ³	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ⁴
“Levi had no inheritance except forty-eight cities, scattered through different parts of the land of Canaan: and as to the tribe of Simeon... they had only a small portion... in the worst part of Judah's lot... afterwards... they formed different colonies in districts which they conquered.”	“In the settlement of Canaan this tribe [Simeon] had only a small portion of Judah's lot, and such families as afterward became powerful formed different colonies and settled in territory outside the borders... Levi also received no inheritance except forty-eight cities scattered in different parts of the land.”

The two examples above are not merely instances in which Ellen White happened to agree with Adam Clarke. In both cases, Clarke supplies historical information that Genesis itself does not contain. He follows the biblical text beyond Jacob's words, traces the later history of the tribes, explains how Reuben's forfeited privileges were distributed, and describes the peculiar settlement of Simeon and Levi. White incorporates the same

information into her narrative, including details sufficiently distinctive to make the literary dependence difficult to dismiss.

Conclusion — Where are the Citations?

There is an important question here that goes beyond these particular parallels: *why is none of this acknowledged?* When White's narrative moves beyond what Genesis says and begins supplying historical details already worked out in Clarke's commentary, the reader is given no indication that the material has come from another writer.

By the time *Patriarchs and Prophets* appeared in 1890, Ellen White and those working with her had already learned that this was a dangerous practice. Their earlier painful experience with *The Life of Paul* had exposed the problem dramatically. That book had incorporated material from other published works, and the resulting controversy forced White and her associates to confront uncomfortable questions about literary borrowing and attribution. The controversy surrounding the expanded *Great Controversy* in the late 1880s brought the issue to the public's attention. In March of 1889, in Ellen White's home town of Healdsburg, California, Canright published an **embarrassing article** in the local newspaper showing Ellen White's plagiarism of material in the 1888 *Great Controversy*.⁵

One might therefore expect the next major historical work to be especially careful. If previously published material was being incorporated into a book that carried Ellen White's prophetic authority, readers should have been told where that material came from. If a commentator supplied the historical information, cite the commentator. If a historian supplied the detail, identify the historian. If an earlier writer supplied the interpretation, acknowledge the writer.

Instead, *Patriarchs and Prophets* appeared with no attribution whatsoever. The 21 chapters examined in this study are strikingly free of any citations identifying the literary sources behind their distinctive additions. The reader encounters Clarke's historical conclusions as part of Ellen White's narrative, but Clarke's name disappears. Readers are left with the

impression that the book contains only the writings of a prophetess.

The issue is not that Ellen White used books. No serious reader should object to an author consulting commentaries, histories, or other sources. The issue is *how the resulting material was presented*. A writer may borrow information honestly and identify the source. A historian may synthesize the work of earlier scholars and acknowledge them. But when distinctive information from a commentator's pages is incorporated into a narrative presented as the product of divine illumination, the absence of attribution becomes much more significant.

The problem becomes even sharper when we remember what the reader was being told about the book. *Patriarchs and Prophets* was not presented merely as Ellen White's retelling of Genesis. Its distinctive details were understood by her readers as the product of special revelation—information God had shown her about events that Scripture did not record. White fostered this view, telling her followers that the contents did not come from any "human mind" but that the Lord "traced" the words on her heart.

The cognitive dissonance is disturbing: while claiming no human mind authored the book, she was quietly incorporating the ideas of a dozen or more authors into it.

¹ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, note on Genesis 49:3–4.

² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 235.

³ Clarke, note on Genesis 49:7.

⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 235.

⁵ D.M. Canright, "Is Mrs. E.G. White a Plagiarist?", *Healdsburg Enterprise*, March 20, 1889.

14 ♦ John Milton

John Milton (1608–1674) was an English poet, widely regarded as one of the greatest figures in English literature. He was best known for his epic masterpiece *Paradise Lost* (1667), dictated entirely after he had gone completely blind. Milton dramatically expanded the Genesis narrative of the Fall of Man, Satan's rebellion, and Edenic life into a grand, highly vivid theological drama.

Parallels to Milton

In 1858, SDA pioneer J. N. Andrews supplied Ellen White with a copy of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.¹ The official account insists she set it unread on a high shelf. Yet the architecture of Milton's epic — not its prose, but its distinctive dramatic narrative and structure — runs through the chapters of *Patriarchs and Prophets* that have no basis in Genesis: the war in heaven, the temptation, and the council of redemption. These are scenes Scripture does not narrate. Milton staged them. **She copied them.**

1. The Rebellion in Heaven

Genesis says nothing about why Satan fell. Isaiah and Ezekiel speak of pride, but neither gives a trigger. Milton supplied one: the exaltation of the Son. That extra-biblical mechanism — the Son proclaimed, Satan consumed with envy, a secret campaign of insinuation, and the rhetoric of liberty against divine “tyranny” — is the spine of White's account.

John Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , Book 5 ²	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> , ch. 1 ³
“This day I have begot whom I declare / My only Son... your head I him appoint”... [and Satan,] “fraught with envy against the Son of God, that day / Honoured by his great Father... could not bear / Through pride that sight, and thought himself impaired.”	“coveting the glory with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power that was the prerogative of Christ alone... ‘Why should Christ have the supremacy? Why is He honored above Lucifer?’”
“Natives and sons of Heaven possessed before / By none; and if not equal all, yet free, / Equally free; for orders and degrees / Jar not with liberty, but well consist. / Who can in reason then, or right, assume / Monarchy over such as live by right / His equals?”	“[Lucifer urged] that angels needed no such restraint... it was his object to secure freedom for all. But now even the liberty which they had hitherto enjoyed was at an end; for an absolute Ruler had been appointed them.”

In both accounts the same sequence unfolds: the Son is exalted; Lucifer, unable to bear it, is filled with envy; he works in secret to spread disaffection; and he frames God's government as a new tyranny and himself as the champion of angelic liberty. Not one link of that chain is in the biblical text. Milton imagined it and White turned it into inspiration.

2. The Temptation and the Fall

Milton's Book 9 turned the bare Genesis account of the serpent into a psychological drama, and its distinctive inventions reappear in White's telling: Satan tormented by the sight of Eden's happiness, his deliberate choice of the serpent as his disguise, Eve encountered *alone*, and Adam eating not in deception but knowingly, out of love for his wife.

John Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , Books 4–9 ⁴	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> , ch. 3 ⁵
Satan's torment at their joy: “Sight hateful, sight tormenting! thus these two... Imparadised in one another's arms... while I to Hell am thrust.”	Satan beheld the holy pair “and envied the happiness” of their sinless estate.
The serpent chosen as vehicle: the serpent, “fittest imp of fraud,” in whom “his dark suggestions hide / From sharpest sight.”	“Satan chose to employ as his medium the serpent — a disguise well adapted for his purpose of deception.”

John Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , Books 4–9 ⁴	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> , ch. 3 ⁵
Adam falls knowingly, for love: “he scrupled not to eat, / Against his better knowledge; not deceived, / But fondly overcome with female charm.”	“Adam... was not deceived... [but] resolved to share her fate; if she must die, he would die with her.”

The bare fact that “Adam was not deceived” is Scripture (1 Timothy 2:14). But the *drama* around it — Satan's inner hell at the sight of their bliss, the calculated selection of the serpent, and above all Adam's deliberate choice to perish beside the wife he loved — is Milton's dramatization, and White reproduces it.

3. The Council of Redemption

This is the strongest parallel of all, because it is not a single idea but a four-beat scene reproduced in order. In Milton's Book 3, God asks who will pay the price for fallen man; *heaven falls silent*; no created being can answer; the Son alone offers Himself; and heaven erupts in jubilant song. White's redemption council follows the identical sequence.

John Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , Book 3 ⁶	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> , ch. 4 ⁷
Heaven falls silent: “He asked, but all the heavenly quire stood mute, / And silence was in Heaven: on Man's behalf / Patron or intercessour none appeared.”	“Angels ceased their songs of praise.” The angels “offered to become a sacrifice for man. But an angel's life could not pay the debt; only He who created man had power to redeem him.”
The Son alone offers Himself: “Behold me then: me for him, life for life / I offer... I shall rise victorious, and subdue / My vanquisher... Death his death's wound shall then receive.”	“Christ assured the angels that by His death He would ransom many, and would destroy him who had the power of death. He would recover the kingdom which man had lost.”
Heaven erupts in joy: “Heaven rung / With jubilee, and loud Hosannas filled / The eternal regions... sweet / The Angels... with a shout / Loud as from numbers without number.”	“Then joy, inexpressible joy, filled heaven... ‘the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.’”

Silence; the insufficiency of every lesser being; the Son alone stepping forward to offer Himself; then heaven bursting into song. Genesis contains none of this. This staged, four-part

theatric scene — imagined by Milton — plays out beat for beat in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

These are only a few of the strongest examples. The parallels run deeper than three scenes. Scene after scene, the same distinctive inventions surface in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

Further Parallels

Beyond the three staged scenes above, the same pattern of distinctive, non-biblical invention recurs throughout the opening chapters of *Patriarchs and Prophets*. None of the following is drawn from Genesis; each appears in Milton's epic and again in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

Extra-biblical element	<i>Paradise Lost</i>	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i>
The heavenly council summoned. God assembles the entire angelic host specifically to proclaim the Son's status — the setting Scripture never describes.	"Th' empyreal host / Of Angels by imperial summons called, / Innumerable before the Almighty's throne / Forthwith, from all the ends of Heaven, appeared... Hear, all ye Angels." (Bk. 5) ⁸	"The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son... About the throne gathered the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng..." ⁹
Loyal angels reason with the rebels. Before the open break, faithful angels appeal to the disaffected to reconsider.	Abdiel, "than whom none with more zeal adored / The Deity," withstands Satan: "O alienate from God... cease this impious rage, / And tempt not these." (Bk. 5) ¹⁰	"Angels that were loyal and true sought to reconcile him to the will of his Creator... [and] labored to counteract the influence of Satan." ¹¹
Pride forbids repentance. The rebel nearly relents, but is held back from returning by pride and shame — the same psychological block in both.	"O then at last relent: is there no place / Left for repentance...? / None left but by submission; and that word / Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame." (Bk. 4) ¹²	"He nearly reached the decision to return, but pride forbade him. It was too great a sacrifice... to confess that he had been in error." ¹³
The serpent flatters Eve for her beauty. The tempter opens not with the fruit but with worship of Eve's beauty.	"Sovran Mistress... sole wonder... A Goddess among Gods, adored and served / By Angels numberless... Empress of this fair world, resplendent Eve!" (Bk. 9) ¹⁴	"But the serpent continued, in a musical voice, with subtle praise of her surpassing loveliness..." ¹⁵

The pattern is unmistakable. Wherever Genesis falls silent — the war in heaven, the psychology of the temptation, the council

where redemption was pledged — and the sober commentaries have nothing to offer, it is Milton's epic that fills the gap, beat for beat, invention for invention. These are not the shared commonalities of Christian doctrine. They are the specific imaginative choices of a seventeenth-century poet, reappearing two centuries later in a book its author insisted was “not the product of any human mind.” The blind poet dictated *Paradise Lost* to his daughters. It appears he dictated a good deal of *Patriarchs and Prophets* as well.

¹ Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant*, 16.

² John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 5, lines 603–611, 790–797.

³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 35–37.

⁴ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 4, lines 505–508; Book 9, lines 89–99, 998–999.

⁵ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 53–56.

⁶ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 3, lines 217–222, 236–252, 345–349.

⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 63–65.

⁸ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 5, lines 583–600.

⁹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 36.

¹⁰ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 5, lines 805–848 (Abdiel).

¹¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 38.

¹² Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 4, lines 79–82.

¹³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 39.

¹⁴ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 9, lines 532–548.

¹⁵ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 53.

15 ♦ John Kitto

John Kitto (1804–1854) was an English biblical scholar and author. Totally deafened at age twelve after a fall from a roof, he overcame severe poverty to teach himself multiple languages and train as a printer. He later traveled extensively across the Middle East as a missionary and researcher. Leveraging his firsthand observations of Middle Eastern geography, customs, and culture, Kitto authored a widely popular, highly detailed reference work named *The Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature* (1845). This book found its way into Ellen White's library.

Parallels to Kitto

The details examined below were not visionary secrets. They were found in Kitto's three-volume *Cyclopedia*.¹ The point here is not that White consulted a *Cyclopedia*, but that she did so without accreditation and while telling others her book came from no human mind.

1. The Ark's "Rest": Becalmed, not Grounded

Genesis 8:4 says plainly that “the ark rested...upon the mountains of Ararat.” The obvious reading — and the one carried by centuries of sermon and hymn — is that the vessel *grounded* on a mountain peak. Kitto's *Cyclopedia* argues, against that popular view, for something quite different: that the ark reached a state of calm — “a measure of comparative repose” — while still afloat among the mountains as the waters began to fall.

Kitto, <i>Cyclopædia</i> ²	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ³
“...it may merely imply that after it had been driven and tossed to and fro on the waste of waters, it at length settled, i.e. attained a measure of comparative repose, and became more stationary over...the mountains of Ararat, when the waters began to subside... A vessel enjoys more real rest when becalmed, than when she grounds on the top of a submarine mountain in a troubled sea...the ark did not touch the earth until the waters were abated...”	“As the waters began to subside, the Lord caused the ark to drift into a spot protected by a group of mountains that had been preserved by his power. These mountains were but a little distance apart, and the ark moved about in this quiet haven, and was no longer driven upon the boundless ocean. This gave great relief to the weary, tempest-tossed voyagers.”

The wording differs — Kitto is parsing a Hebrew verb; White is painting a scene — but the idea is the same and it is a *distinctive* idea: the ark comes to rest not by beaching on a summit but by reaching calm water while still floating amid the mountains. This is not the plain sense of Genesis, and it is not the common tradition. It is the minority reading Kitto defends against “the common belief that it lay on a mountain peak.” That *Patriarchs and Prophets* adopts Kitto's minority position is difficult to explain as coincidence. Notably, White keeps the image while discarding the argument Kitto built.

2. Further Parallels

The remaining parallels are individually lighter — each turns on a piece of natural-history or antiquarian detail that was available in more than one nineteenth-century source, Kitto's among them. What makes them worth listing is their *character* and their *clustering*: they are precisely the sort of incidental, extra-biblical facts a writer picks up from a reference book, dropped into the narrative as divine knowledge. No one of them proves borrowing. Together they show that the material was available in the books of the day.

Detail & source	Kitto, <i>Cyclopædia</i>	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i>	Note
Gopher wood identified as	“...by the gopher wood, we are to understand the	“The material employed in the construction of the	Kitto notes that the cypress identification is

Detail & source	Kitto, <i>Cyclopedia</i>	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i>	Note
cypress, prized for resisting decay	cypress... the wood of the cypress, being almost incorruptible, was likely to be preferred..." ⁴	ark was the cypress, or gopher wood, which would be untouched by decay for hundreds of years." ⁵	common the view of "the greatest number of writers." The pairing with incorruptibility is what echoes Kitto.
The raven's keen scent	"...the raven...is naturally observant and solitary; lives in pairs; has a most acute scent; and flies to a great height." ⁶	"They sent out a raven, a bird of quick scent, to discover whether the earth had become dry." ⁷	Genesis gives no reason for choosing a raven. White supplies the same reason that Kitto lists — keen scent.

Conclusion

Ellen White's *unusual insight* into the landing of the ark is astonishingly similar to Kitto's speculation. That is precisely the kind of detail that should make one cautious about claims of supernatural knowledge. The question is not whether Ellen White could have received the image in vision. The question is why a distinctive interpretation already sitting in her library later appears in her prophetic narrative.

The other examples are less decisive individually. They do not prove that Kitto was the source of every incidental detail. But they demonstrate something important: the literary environment in her personal library was filled with "human minds" with ready-made explanations of the biblical world — geography, customs, natural history, and ancient practices — that were woven into White's narrative whenever Scripture left a gap.

Kitto did the research. White supplied the revelation.

¹ John Kitto, ed., *A Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*, 3 vols. (New York: Ivison & Phinney, 1858). The 1858 version was not available for this research, so the following versions were used: Volume 1: 1880. Volume 2: 1864. Volume 3: 1876. Presumably, the text quoted was substantially the same as the 1858 version.

² Kitto, "Ararat," *Cyclopedia*, vol. 1, 200. The article rejects the common assumption that Genesis 8:4 requires the ark to have grounded on a

mountain summit, arguing instead that the Hebrew verb rendered “rested” may denote only that the vessel “attained a measure of comparative repose” while still afloat over the mountains of Ararat as the waters subsided.

³ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 105.

⁴ Kitto, “Gopher Wood,” *Cyclopedia*, vol. 1, 785. Kitto reports the cypress identification as that of “the greatest number of writers” (citing Fuller, Bochart, and Celsius) and notes the argument that cypress “being almost incorruptible, was likely to be preferred.” The identification itself is thus commonplace and cannot, on its own, establish dependence; it is the conjunction of cypress *with* decay-resistance, asserted as fact, that parallels *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Kitto’s own conclusion is markedly more tentative than White’s: “the whole of these suggestions amount only to conjectures.”

⁵ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 92.

⁶ Kitto, “Raven,” *Cyclopedia*, vol. 3, 372.

⁷ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 105.

16 ♦ Daniel March

Daniel March (1816–1909) was an American Congregationalist minister, author, and devotional writer whose vivid, narrative-driven books were immense bestsellers across the late nineteenth-century Protestant world. After completing his education at Yale Divinity School, March pastored influential churches in the northeastern United States. He specialized in cinematic, highly emotional, and descriptive retellings of biblical events designed for home reading. His most famous works include *Night Scenes in the Bible* (1868), *Home Life in the Bible* (1873), and *Walks and Homes of Jesus* (1856). All three of these books were in Ellen White's library.

White was well-known to have plagiarized heavily from March in her major books, such as *Prophets and Kings*. When SDA researcher Fred Veltman examined the plagiarism in some chapters of *Desire of Ages*, he discovered 129 parallels with March's *Night Scenes of the Bible* and *Walks and Homes of Jesus*.¹

Parallels to March

Ellen White's acquaintance with Daniel March's *Night Scenes in the Bible* is documented in her own hand. In 1878, she wrote to Mary White: "Is *Night Scenes of the Bible* there? If so, send it."² *Patriarchs and Prophets* was published twelve years later, in 1890. March's book is a devotional retelling of individual biblical nights, four of which cover the same episodes White would later dramatize: the last night of Sodom, Abraham's night at Moriah, Jacob's night at Bethel, and Jacob's night of wrestling at the Jabbok.

1. The Plain "as the Garden of the Lord"

Genesis 13:10 supplies the phrase “garden of the Lord” itself, and both writers open with it. What Genesis does not supply is everything both writers add to it — the “fair city,” flocks on the hills, merchants and caravans, and the same closing turn from natural abundance to moral corruption, ending on the identical phrase, “debases the soul.”

March, <i>Night Scenes</i> ³	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ⁴
“The plains surrounding the city are like the garden of the Lord in fertility...The distant hills are covered with flocks. The merchants of the East bring their treasures from afar. The camels and dromedaries of the desert lay down their burdens at her gates...the fair city...revels in the profusion of everything that nature and art can produce. The chief men display the luxury and the pride of princes...Idleness and riches stimulate the appetite for pleasure, and they go to every excess in indulgence...their whole thought and effort and desire is given to a life of the senses, denying God and debasing the soul.”	“Fairest among the cities of the Jordan Valley was Sodom, set in a plain which was ‘as the garden of the Lord’ in its fertility and beauty...Rich harvests clothed the fields, and flocks and herds covered the encircling hills. Art and commerce contributed to enrich the proud city of the plain. The treasures of the East adorned her palaces, and the caravans of the desert brought their stores of precious things...The profusion reigning everywhere gave birth to luxury and pride. Idleness and riches make the heart hard that has never been oppressed by want...The love of pleasure was fostered by wealth and leisure, and the people gave themselves up to sensual indulgence...It enfeebles the mind, perverts the understanding, and debases the soul.”

This is one continuous passage in each book, not two writers hitting the same note by coincidence twice. Genesis 19 says nothing about Sodom’s economy, its hillside flocks, or its idle wealth; both authors invent the same scenery, in the same order, and land on the same word to describe what that wealth did to its people.

2. The Evening Before

Genesis 19:1 opens simply with “the two angels came to Sodom at even.” It gives no scene of the city itself in the hours before their arrival. Both writers supply one, and independently reach

for the same detail — the coolness of evening drawing an idle population out of doors.

<i>March, Night Scenes</i> ⁵	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ⁶
“The idle multitude are coming and going to gather the gossip of the day and enjoy the cool wind that comes up from the lake outside of the walls. The sun has gone down behind the western hills, and the brief twilight lingers...”	“Evening fell upon a scene of loveliness and security...The coolness of eventide had called forth the inhabitants of the city, and the pleasure-seeking throngs were passing to and fro, intent upon the enjoyment of the hour.”

3. One Attentive Man

Genesis records only that Lot saw the two men and invited them in. Neither writer is content with that; both comment on the humble/common appearance of the men, both add a wider, indifferent city against which Lot alone stands out, and both specify that he had no idea who his guests actually were.

<i>March, Night Scenes</i> ⁷	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ⁸
“Two strangers are seen approaching the city...They seem to be only common travelers coming down from the hill-country...God’s mightiest messengers of mercy and of wrath often come in a very common garb...There was but one man at the gate of Sodom sufficiently attentive to notice the strangers and invite them to his own house. He did not know who they were, nor did he suspect the awful errand upon which they came.”	“In the twilight two strangers drew near to the city gate. They were apparently travelers coming in to tarry for the night. None could discern in those humble wayfarers the mighty heralds of divine judgment...But there was one man who manifested kindly attention toward the strangers and invited them to his home. Lot did not know their true character, but politeness and hospitality were habitual with him.”

After this passage, March draws the same scene out into a warning — that the “angels of the blessing and of deliverance will come and pass by us unawares, and we shall not receive their help” if we are not watchful. White gives the same idea its negative form: “Many a household, in closing its doors against a stranger, has shut out God’s messenger, who would have brought blessing and hope and peace.”⁹

4. Fidelity in Small Duties Opens the Door

March, <i>Night Scenes</i> ¹⁰	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ¹¹
“Fidelity in the most common and homely duties of life opens the door of the house for the greatest of heaven’s blessings to come.”	“Had he not cultivated a spirit of courtesy, he might have been left to perish with the rest of Sodom... Faithfulness or neglect in what are apparently the smallest duties may open the door for life’s richest blessings or its greatest calamities.”

5. The Hidden Boundary

Genesis 19 gives no verdict on whether the men of Sodom were behaving that final night any worse than on any other, and no image for what finally exhausted divine patience. Both writers supply the same verdict and the same image, down to the mob’s “hooting and jeers” and the same verb — “kindle” — applied to the fires of wrath about to fall.

March, <i>Night Scenes</i> ¹²	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ¹³
“They hoot and jeer... The hour of rest has not come before a crowd gathers in the streets and besets the house... For when the angels of mercy go back to Him that sent them, it may be that they will kindle them the fires of wrath... They were no more riotous or dissolute on the last night than they had been many nights before... they had already passed ‘The hidden boundary between God’s patience and his wrath.’”	“...before they had retired for the night, a lawless crowd gathered about the house... when the hooting and jeers of the mob were heard... That last night was marked by no greater sins than many others before it; but mercy, so long slighted, had at last ceased its pleading. The inhabitants of Sodom had passed the limits of divine forbearance — ‘the hidden boundary between God’s patience and His wrath.’ The fires of His vengeance were about to be kindled in the vale of Siddim.”

One detail is worth noting for accuracy: March himself sets off the boundary line with its own line breaks, suggesting he is citing a hymn, sermon, or poem rather than coining the phrase.¹⁴ That does not weaken the case — it strengthens it in a different way. If both writers are quoting a common third source, the parallel still shows White’s prose is built from the devotional literature circulating in her lifetime, rather than arriving whole by vision. Either March is her direct source, or March and White independently drew on the same piece of period writing; neither

possibility is compatible with a supernatural origin for the phrase.

6. “God will not always be mocked...”

March, <i>Night Scenes</i> ¹⁵	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ¹⁶
“He will not always be mocked. He will not long be trifled with.”	“God will not always be mocked; He will not long be trifled with.”

This is not a scriptural quotation; Galatians 6:7 (“God is not mocked”) reads nothing like it. The sentence, down to its two-clause structure and its precise verbs, appears in both books at the same point in the Sodom narrative — the summary judgment on the scoffers who ignored Lot’s warning.

7. The Sons-in-Law Laughing

Genesis 19:23 states only that “the sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.” It says nothing about what Lot’s sons-in-law were doing that morning. Both writers invent the same scene, including the same epithet for Lot himself.

March, <i>Night Scenes</i> ¹⁷	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ¹⁸
“The sun is already risen upon the earth, and the bright morning promises a beautiful day. The early risers in Sodom are making themselves merry with the frightened old man. The sons-in-law are on the way to his house, to laugh at him... They cannot think of troubling themselves about the anxieties of a wakeful and weak-minded old man.”	“The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. The bright rays of the morning seemed to speak only prosperity and peace... The sons-in-law of Lot were making merry at the fears and warnings of the weak-minded old man.”

8. A Vision of the Night

Genesis 22 gives no mode for how the command to slay Isaac arrived, and does not place Abraham at Beersheba when he received it (he returns there only afterward, 22:19). Both writers supply the same setting and the same mode of revelation, and

both add the same detail Genesis withholds — that the fire of Abraham’s youth had already gone out of him.

March, Night Scenes ¹⁹	Patriarchs and Prophets ²⁰
“Abraham was an hundred and twenty years old when he received the strange and startling command...He already passed for an aged man, even upon the longer average of human life in his time. His heart had lost much of the fervid and hopeful feeling of youth...it is very hard for an old man to find that the sorest trial is reserved for the last, when the burden of age is heavy upon his shoulders...”	“At the time of receiving this command, Abraham had reached the age of a hundred and twenty years. He was regarded as an old man, even in his generation...now the ardor of his youth had passed away...God had reserved His last, most trying test for Abraham until the burden of years was heavy upon him, and he longed for rest from anxiety and toil.”

9. The Household at Beersheba

In the same breath, both writers pause to catalogue Abraham’s wealth in nearly identical terms — not merely that he was rich, which Genesis says in passing elsewhere, but the specific picture of flocks covering the plains and a household of servants numbered in the hundreds.

March, Night Scenes ²¹	Patriarchs and Prophets ²²
“His quiet home in Beersheba had been sought as a place of rest...There he had gathered around him a great household, even hundreds of servants and herdsmen, and thousands of camels, and sheep, and goats and cattle. His flocks and tents covered all the grassy plains between the deserts of Arabia and the hills and mountains of Judea. There Abraham had become very rich in silver and gold, and he was already greatest among all the men of the East. And there was fulfilled unto him the Divine promise in the gift of Isaac, the son of his hopes and heart.”	“The patriarch was dwelling at Beersheba, surrounded by prosperity and honor. He was very rich, and was honored as a mighty prince by the rulers of the land. Thousands of sheep and cattle covered the plains that spread out beyond his encampment. On every side were the tents of his retainers, the home of hundreds of faithful servants. The son of promise had grown up to manhood by his side.”

10. Not by Ordinary Death

Genesis moves directly from the command to sacrifice Isaac to Abraham’s obedience, with no reflection on what made this trial different from an ordinary loss. Both writers supply the same contrast — that even losing Isaac to sickness or accident would have been a lighter grief than being required to kill him.

March, <i>Night Scenes</i> ²³	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ²⁴
“It would have been enough to break an old man’s heart to lose such a son by the ordinary course of sickness and death.”	“The loss of such a son by accident or disease would have been heart rending to the fond father; it would have bowed down his whitened head with grief; but he was commanded to shed the blood of that son with his own hand.”

11. Doubt about the Voice

Genesis shows no hesitation in Abraham at all in obeying God — he simply rises early and goes (22:3). Both writers, independently of the text, give him a moment of doubting whether the command came from God or from an evil source impersonating God, and both then have him look up at the stars and recall the promise given fifty years before.

March, <i>Night Scenes</i> ²⁵	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ²⁶
“Strange, terrible and unaccountable it must have seemed...as if he had dreamed, or as if some tempting and tormenting demon had assumed to speak in the name of the Lord...He steps forth silently into the open air and looks up...all ablaze with the fiery hosts of the stars...the Divine voice...fifty years before had once said to him...so shall thy seed be...And now has that same voice commanded him to slay his only son?”	“Satan was at hand to suggest that he must be deceived, for the divine law commands, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ and God would not require what He had once forbidden. Going outside his tent, Abraham looked up to the calm brightness of the unclouded heavens, and recalled the promise made nearly fifty years before, that his seed should be innumerable as the stars. If this promise was to be fulfilled through Isaac, how could he be put to death? Abraham was tempted to believe that he might be under a delusion.”

White adds the Exodus prohibition (“Thou shalt not kill”) as Abraham’s reasoning, an anachronism since the giving of the

law at Sinai has not yet occurred in the narrative's own chronology — her own embellishment layered onto the shared invented doubt-scene.²⁷

12. Watching Isaac Sleep

This entire domestic scene is absent from Genesis, which moves directly from the command to Abraham rising “early in the morning” (22:3). Both writers insert a night beforehand in which the father looks at his sleeping son and weighs, and rejects, telling the mother.

March, <i>Night Scenes</i> ²⁸	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ²⁹
“As he passes silently...and looks upon the calm face of his sleeping son...Shall not the son be permitted to take leave of his mother? It would...perhaps make it impossible for Abraham to obey.”	“He went to the place where Isaac lay sleeping...For a moment the father looked upon the dear face of his son, then turned tremblingly away. He went to the side of Sarah, who was also sleeping. Should he awaken her...he was restrained by the fear that she might hinder him.”

13. The Two Young Men

Genesis 22:3 gives Abraham “two young men” as companions, nothing more. Both writers add the same two beats Genesis withholds: that Abraham kept his purpose from them, and that he spent the journey hoping some word would come releasing him from it.

March, <i>Night Scenes</i> ³⁰	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ³¹
“...shutting up in his own heart the dark and dreadful secret...All night long he waits, if peradventure that voice which gave the terrible command will speak again and tell him that his faith has been sufficiently tried — his son may live. But no such message comes.”	“The patriarch, pondering his heavy secret, had no heart for words...While his son and the young men were sleeping, he spent the night in prayer, still hoping that some heavenly messenger might come to say that the trial was enough, that the youth might return unharmed to his mother. But no relief came to his tortured soul.”

14. Isaac Could Have Overpowered His Father

<i>March, Night Scenes</i> ³²	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ³³
“He is a full-grown man...and he can easily resist or escape the hand of his father, who has a hundred more years upon his shoulders.”	“He could have escaped his doom, had he chosen to do so; the grief-stricken old man...could not have opposed the will of the vigorous youth.”

15. Angels Present

Both writers extend the Akedah into a typology of Calvary, and both reach for the same superlative — that no trial could have been greater, no test could have caused deeper anguish — before adding the identical invented detail that angels stood by and were forbidden to act.

<i>March, Night Scenes</i> ³⁴	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ³⁵
“All the sorrows that wrung the heart of Abraham...were imposed on him to help us understand how real, how deep, how unutterable was the self-denial of the infinite God in giving His own Son to death...No trial, no mental torture could possibly have been greater to Abraham than that which he bore...Legions of angels were in waiting, but they were not permitted to interpose.”	“The agony which he endured...was permitted that he might understand from his own experience something of the greatness of the sacrifice made by the infinite God for man’s redemption. No other test could have caused Abraham such torture of soul as did the offering of his son. God gave His Son to a death of agony...The angels who witnessed the humiliation and soul anguish of the Son of God were not permitted to interpose, as in the case of Isaac.”

16. Jacob at Bethel

Turning to Jacob’s night at Bethel, based on Genesis 28:11–22.

<i>March, Night Scenes</i>	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ³⁶
“Exhausted on the journey he reaches a solitary rocky hill...a hard pillow and a heavy heart...He feels, as he never had in his father’s tent, the need of protection.” ³⁷	“The evening of the second day found him far away from his father’s tents. He felt that he was an outcast...he hardly dared to pray...he felt the need of protection from God as he had never felt it before.”

Genesis does not delve into Jacob's inner state of despair. Using similar wording, both writers add an emotional state that is absent from Genesis.

17. The Gorge

Turning to Jacob's night of wrestling at the Jabbok: Genesis 32 says only that Jacob was left "alone." Nothing in the text characterizes the place as dangerous. Both writers populate it independently with the same two threats.

March, <i>Night Scenes</i>	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ³⁸
"...robbery and murder were even more common. And then, too, the lion couched for his prey, and the bear wandered at night on the banks of the Jabbok." ³⁹	"It was in a lonely, mountainous region, the haunt of wild beasts and the lurking place of robbers and murderers."

18. A Sudden Hand in the Dark

Genesis 32:24 reads only, "there wrestled a man with him." The grasping-hand-in-darkness image, and Jacob's assumption that his life is under attack from an enemy, appear in both writers in strikingly similar wording.

March, <i>Night Scenes</i>	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> , ⁴⁰
"Suddenly he feels the grasp of a strong hand laid upon him, and he is sure that...it must be the hand of an enemy. He springs to his feet, grapples his unknown antagonist." ⁴¹	"Suddenly a strong hand was laid upon him. He thought that an enemy was seeking his life, and he endeavored to wrest himself from the grasp of his assailant."

19. Two Angel Hosts

Genesis 32:1–2 is a single verse: Jacob meets "God's host" and names the place Mahanaim, "two camps." Both writers expand this one verse into the same scene — angels front and behind, and Jacob's mind going back specifically to the vision at Bethel twenty years earlier.

<i>March, Night Scenes</i> ⁴²	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> ⁴³
“...he had received a strange and startling assurance of the Divine protection...Jacob lifted up his eyes and saw in open day, as if encamped in the air, two hosts of angels encompassing him behind and before and moving with him for his protection. He remembered the vision of Bethel, and he rejoiced that the heavenly guardians who cheered him on his departure twenty years before were ready to welcome him on his return.”	“Again the Lord granted Jacob a token of the divine care. As he traveled southward from Mount Gilead, two hosts of heavenly angels seemed to encompass him behind and before, advancing with his company, as if for their protection. Jacob remembered the vision at Bethel so long before, and his burdened heart grew lighter at this evidence that the divine messengers who had brought him hope and courage at his flight from Canaan were to be the guardians of his return.”

This is a fuller and closer match than a single shared verse can account for: the same two-hosts image, the same explicit recollection of Bethel, a long interval, and the same angels who watched over him at his departure would be there for his return. Genesis supplies none of this.

20. Further Wrestling Parallels

Detail & source	<i>March, Night Scenes</i>	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i>	Note
Alone with God so the family will not see his distress	“He could not bear to have his family see his distress...he would rather be alone with God.” ⁴⁴	“He desired to be alone with God.” ⁴⁵	The motive (shielding the family) is March’s addition to the scene of Gen. 32:22–24; White keeps the phrase without the stated motive.
The struggle passes in total silence	“...a real hand-to-hand grapple in which neither party speaks a word...” ⁴⁶	“In the darkness the two struggled for the mastery. Not a word was spoken...” ⁴⁷	Not stated in Genesis 32:24–25.

Conclusion

Taken across all four episodes, the pattern is consistent with what the December 1878 letter already suggests: this was not a book White glanced at once. Scenes, gestures, and turns of phrase recur across a dozen years and four separate nights of the

patriarchal narrative — the sleeping son not to be disturbed, the hand seized in darkness and mistaken for an enemy's, the gorge stocked with beasts and robbers, the sons-in-law still laughing as the fire falls. None of these is in Genesis. All of them are in a book from a "human mind" — a book she asked Mary White to send her.

¹ "The Desire of Ages Project: The Data," *Ministry*, Oct. 1990. The book analyzed for this study was Daniel March's *Night Scenes in the Bible* (Philadelphia: Zeigler and McCurdy, 1872).

² Ellen G. White to Mary White, Dec. 9, 1878, Letter 60, 1878.

³ March, *Night Scenes*, "The Last Night of Sodom," 29-30.

⁴ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 155.

⁵ March, *Night Scenes*, "The Last Night of Sodom," 29-30.

⁶ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 156.

⁷ March, *Night Scenes*, "The Last Night of Sodom," 31.

⁸ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 157.

⁹ March, *Night Scenes*, "The Last Night of Sodom," 31; Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 157.

¹⁰ March, *Night Scenes*, "The Last Night of Sodom," 31.

¹¹ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 157.

¹² March, *Night Scenes*, "The Last Night of Sodom," 32-33.

¹³ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 158.

¹⁴ March sets the line off with its own capitalization and line breaks, indicating a quoted source rather than his own composition; the ultimate origin has not been traced.

¹⁵ March, *Night Scenes*, "The Last Night of Sodom," 33-34.

¹⁶ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 166.

¹⁷ March, *Night Scenes*, "The Last Night of Sodom," 34.

¹⁸ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 161.

¹⁹ March, *Night Scenes*, "Abraham's Night Vision at Beersheba," 45-46.

²⁰ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 146.

²¹ March, *Night Scenes*, "Abraham's Night Vision at Beersheba," 46-47.

²² Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 146.

²³ March, *Night Scenes*, "Abraham's Night Vision at Beersheba," 47.

²⁴ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 147.

²⁵ March, *Night Scenes*, "Abraham's Night Vision at Beersheba," 49-51.

²⁶ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 147.

²⁷ The law given at Sinai (Exodus 20:13) postdates the Akedah in the narrative's own internal chronology by several centuries.

²⁸ March, *Night Scenes*, "Abraham's Night Vision at Beersheba," 49-51.

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- ²⁹ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 150. The sentence describing Isaac's sleep begins on p. 147 and continues on p. 150, across a full-page illustration in the original edition.
- ³⁰ March, *Night Scenes*, "Abraham's Night Vision at Beersheba," 56.
- ³¹ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 150.
- ³² March, *Night Scenes*, "Abraham's Night Vision at Beersheba," 58.
- ³³ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 151.
- ³⁴ March, *Night Scenes*, "Abraham's Night Vision at Beersheba," 61.
- ³⁵ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 153.
- ³⁶ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 183.
- ³⁷ March, *Night Scenes*, "Jacob's Night at Bethel."
- ³⁸ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 195.
- ³⁹ March, *Night Scenes*, "Jacob's Night of Wrestling with the Angel."
- ⁴⁰ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 196.
- ⁴¹ March, *Night Scenes*, "Jacob's Night of Wrestling with the Angel."
- ⁴² March, *Night Scenes*, "Jacob's Night of Wrestling with the Angel," 87-88.
- ⁴³ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 194.
- ⁴⁴ March, *Night Scenes*, "Jacob's Night of Wrestling with the Angel."
- ⁴⁵ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 195.
- ⁴⁶ March, *Night Scenes*, "Jacob's Night of Wrestling with the Angel."
- ⁴⁷ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 196.

17 ♦ Bible-Defying Statements

Ellen White set a high bar for herself. Late in life, while sifting through decades of letters for another volume of her *Testimonies*, she told her granddaughter that her writings contained “**not one heretical sentence.**”¹ But she also gave her readers an even simpler test. In *Patriarchs and Prophets* itself she wrote: “**Whatever contradicts God's word, we may be sure proceeds from Satan.**”²

This chapter takes her at her word. Rather than beginning with questions of literary borrowing or historical sources, it begins with the standard White herself established: *Does what she wrote agree with Scripture?* Nine passages in *Patriarchs and Prophets* are examined against the biblical text, and in two cases against *Patriarchs and Prophets* itself.

The results fall into three categories:

- **Part One** examines passages in which White contradicts Scripture.
- **Part Two** examines contradictions within White's own writings.
- **Part Three** examines a doctrinal heresy taught by White.

White gave us the test. This chapter simply applies it to her own writings.

Part One: Bible Contradictions

If Ellen White's writings were merely devotional retellings of Bible stories, contradictions would be concerning but not necessarily unexpected. A nineteenth-century author can

misunderstand a passage, combine two traditions, or embellish a narrative. Such mistakes are part of ordinary human writing.

That was not the claim being made for Ellen White's writings. She repeatedly presented her accounts as the product of divine illumination. Her books were described not simply as commentary on Scripture, but as containing special light given by God. When she supplied details that Scripture does not record, her readers were expected to understand those details as information she had been shown.

That changes the equation. An ordinary commentator can be wrong about the Bible. A prophet claiming divine revelation cannot contradict the divine revelation of the Bible.

The issue is not whether every detail in *Patriarchs and Prophets* can be found word-for-word in Scripture. Of course many cannot. The issue is what happens when a supposedly revealed detail *contradicts* the biblical account. If God inspired the additional information, God would be contradicting His own written Word.

Ellen White herself provided the rule by which such a claim should be judged. She did not tell readers to excuse contradictions because the prophet was human, or because the passage was part of a vision, or because the prophet might have misunderstood what she was shown. She wrote plainly: **“Whatever contradicts God's word, we may be sure proceeds from Satan.”**³

That statement leaves no room for escape. If a passage in *Patriarchs and Prophets* contradicts Scripture, the problem cannot be solved simply by calling it an *unusual* detail that Scripture happens not to mention. There is a fundamental difference between *adding* imaginative details to a story and *changing* the Bible's story.

A prophet may claim to reveal what Scripture leaves unstated. But when the alleged revelation changes who did something, what God commanded, what actually happened, or what Scripture explicitly says happened, the claim has crossed a different line. The question is no longer, “Where did this extra

detail come from?" It becomes, "How could this have come from the same God who inspired the Bible?"

The passages that follow are therefore not presented as minor historical curiosities or differences in wording. They are tests of the inspiration claim itself. If *Patriarchs and Prophets* merely expands the biblical story, the source of those expansions remains an important question. But if it *contradicts* the biblical story, it proves the writer to be uninspired.

A City God Promised to Spare

The judgment upon Sodom involved five cities in the Valley of Siddim: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar (Gen. 14:2; 19:20–22). When the angels command Lot to flee to the mountains, he asks instead to take refuge in the small city of Zoar. God grants his request and makes a promise:

See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that **I will not overthrow this city**, for the which thou hast spoken... Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar (Gen. 19:21–22).

God declares that He will not overthrow it, and the narrative immediately connects the city's name with the mercy granted to it.

Patriarchs and Prophets gives Zoar a very different fate:

Lot dwelt but a short time in Zoar. Iniquity prevailed there as in Sodom, and he feared to remain, lest the city should be destroyed. **Not long after, Zoar was consumed, as God had purposed.** Lot made his way to the mountains, and abode in a cave...⁴

The contradiction could hardly be more direct. God says, "*I will not overthrow this city.*" White says, "*Zoar was consumed, as God had purposed.*" The first statement is an explicit promise of preservation; the second says the city was eventually destroyed by God's purpose.

The Bible confirms that Zoar was not consumed. When Moses later recalls the cities God overthrew, he mentions the four destroyed — but not Zoar:

...like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger (Deut. 29:23).

Zoar is absent because it was not overthrown. Scripture continues to refer to Zoar for centuries after the destruction of Sodom. Moses describes the extent of the Promised Land “unto Zoar” (Deut. 34:3). Isaiah speaks of refugees fleeing “unto Zoar” (Isa. 15:5). Jeremiah still speaks of cries heard “from Zoar” (Jer. 48:34).

Writing in the first century, the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus described Lot's escape to Zoar and wrote that the place “is to this day called Zoar.”⁵ Centuries later, Eusebius and Jerome still knew the city as an inhabited settlement, and Kitto summarized their testimony: Zoar had “many inhabitants, and a Roman garrison.”⁶

The biblical and historical picture is consistent: Zoar was spared when the other cities were overthrown, and the city remained a known geographical location long afterward. *Patriarchs and Prophets* says otherwise.

This is a direct conflict with Scripture. God said He would spare Zoar. White said God destroyed it. The two statements cannot both be true. White said it best herself, **“Whatever contradicts God's word, we may be sure proceeds from Satan.”**

Eve and Adam: The Invented Separation

Patriarchs and Prophets stages the temptation of Eve as something the Bible never describes: a scene in which Eve wanders away from Adam and finds herself alone at the tree of temptation.

The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less

danger from temptation than if she were alone. But absorbed in her pleasing task, she unconsciously wandered from his side...she soon found herself gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration upon the forbidden tree.⁷

Genesis gives a very different picture. When Eve takes the fruit, she gives it to “her husband *with her*,” and he eats:

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food...she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Gen. 3:6).

The major English translations agree on the essential point: Adam was *with* Eve when she ate the fruit. The text does not describe Eve returning from another part of the garden to find Adam. It places her husband beside her at the moment of the act.⁸

The separation scene did not originate with White. In Book 9 of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Eve deliberately separates from Adam immediately before the serpent's approach. Milton has her draw her hand away from her husband's and wander off alone:

Thus saying, from her husband's hand her hand / Soft she withdrew... and like a Wood-Nymph light.⁹

Milton invented the separation as part of his dramatic retelling. More than two centuries later, *Patriarchs and Prophets* places essentially the same separation into the biblical story — but now as something Eve was warned against by angels and actually did.

The difference is significant. Milton was writing poetry. He was free to imagine a scene that Genesis does not record. White presented the same basic scene as revealed history, complete with an angelic warning and a moral explanation for Eve's vulnerability.

Defenders sometimes argue that Adam must have been somewhere else because he says nothing during the serpent's conversation with Eve. Many explanations could be invented for

Adam's silence but the bottom line is that his silence cannot overturn an explicit statement: *her husband with her*. That is what the Bible says and it stands.¹⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets* contradicts Scripture by moving Adam away and placing Eve's separation before the temptation.

Who Spoke to Cain?

Genesis is unambiguous about who confronts Cain after his offering is rejected. The LORD Himself speaks to Cain, and the conversation continues for an entire exchange:

Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?' (Gen. 4:6–7, NIV).

Patriarchs and Prophets assigns the speech to someone else:

Through an angel messenger the divine warning was conveyed: 'If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?'¹¹

The distinction matters. Genesis does not merely leave the identity of the speaker unspecified. It repeatedly identifies the speaker as *the LORD* (Yahweh). When Genesis intends to introduce an angelic intermediary, it knows how to do so, explicitly calling the figure "the angel of the LORD" (Gen. 16:7; 22:11). Nothing in Cain's encounter indicates that an angel was delivering God's words on His behalf.

The biblical account says the LORD spoke. *Patriarchs and Prophets* says an angel conveyed the warning. The latter is an additional claim about *who actually delivered the message*.

This is not a minor embellishment. If Ellen White was shown this scene in vision, then she was shown a messenger whom the biblical account does not identify and whose presence changes the scene's description. If Genesis is the inspired record, however, there is no reason to correct Moses by inserting an angel.

Both accounts cannot describe the same speaker.

Samson's Marriage

Patriarchs and Prophets portrays Samson's marriage to the Philistine woman of Timnah as a moral failure — a decision Samson made in violation of God's command at precisely the time when he should have been carrying out his divine mission:

The time when he must execute his divine mission...Samson connected himself with the enemies of Israel...the wife, to obtain whom Samson had transgressed the command of God, proved treacherous to her husband.¹²

But Judges gives an entirely different explanation for the marriage. Samson deliberately asks his parents to obtain the Philistine woman, and the narrator immediately explains that this desire was not merely Samson's own misguided choice:

"Get her for me. She's the right one for me." (His parents did not know that this was from the LORD, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines...) (Judges 14:3–4, NIV).

The distinction is crucial. Scripture does not merely say that God later used Samson's bad decision for a good purpose. It says that Samson's desire for this particular woman was *from the LORD*, because God was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines. The divine purpose was present at the beginning of the episode, not added afterward to salvage Samson's mistake.

Patriarchs and Prophets reverses that explanation. What Judges identifies as originating with the LORD, White identifies as Samson's transgression of God's command. The difference is not merely a difference in emphasis or moral application. One account says God was behind the circumstance; the other says Samson obtained the woman by violating God's command.

Meat in the Diet

After the Flood, God's permission for Noah to eat meat is stated without mentioning any distinction between clean and unclean animals:

“Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything” (Gen. 9:3, NIV).

Patriarchs and Prophets quotes this grant almost verbatim — and then, in the same paragraph, narrows it:

“Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you...” Before this time God had given man no permission to eat animal food...but now that every green thing had been destroyed, **he allowed them to eat the flesh of the clean beasts** that had been preserved in the ark.¹³

White adds a restriction that Genesis does not state. The distinction between clean and unclean animals as a dietary requirement appears centuries later in the biblical narrative, in the law given to Israel through Moses in Leviticus 11. Genesis 9:3 simply gives Noah permission to eat animal food without attaching that restriction to the command. White quotes the unrestricted grant and then, within the very sentence explaining it, inserts the restriction herself.

A possible defense is that only clean animals were available in sufficient numbers. Noah had taken seven pairs of clean animals into the ark but only one pair of unclean animals (Gen. 7:2), so perhaps White was reasoning from the practical circumstances. Whatever her thought process might have been, that does not solve the problem. It is a guess about what Noah *might* have eaten, not something Genesis says. The biblical text gave Noah permission to eat "everything that lives and moves." White said God allowed Noah to eat "clean beasts" only. The two are irreconcilable.

Part Two: The Prophetess Contradicts Herself

It has been established in Part One that Ellen White contradicted the Bible in multiple places. Part Two asks a different question: Does Ellen White agree with herself? This matters because she repeatedly presented her descriptions of biblical events as

revelations given to her by God. If two accounts of the same event contain materially different details, the problem cannot simply be dismissed as two different interpretations of the same passage. If both accounts are presented as what she was shown, how can one know which one is real?

Uninspired writers sometimes revise their understanding of an event. Historians discover new evidence. Authors correct earlier statements after uncovering new information. This is expected. But that is not the standard Ellen White herself established for her prophetic writings. She claimed divine guidance in describing scenes that Scripture does not record. When those descriptions contradict each other, the reader must question whether either came from a divine source.

Two Different Wrestling Stories

Genesis records that Jacob is left alone and wrestles with a man until daybreak.

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day...And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me (Gen. 32:24–26).

Scripture describes what was said when morning approached, but says nothing about conversation during the struggle itself. *Patriarchs and Prophets* turns that silence into a specific claim:

In the darkness the two struggled for the mastery. Not a word was spoken, but Jacob put forth all his strength...¹⁴

So far, that could be dismissed as an interpretation of what Scripture leaves unstated. However, Ellen White had already described the same night very differently.

In the earlier *Spirit of Prophecy* account, Jacob is not silent. He spends the night pleading with the angel, confessing his repentance, while the angel repeatedly brings his past sins back into the conversation:

He makes supplications with tears. He pleads that he has deeply repented of his sins, and the wrongs against his brother... All night Jacob wrestled with the angel, making supplication for a blessing. The angel seemed to be resisting his prayer, by continually calling his sins to his remembrance... In his distress Jacob referred to the repentance of his soul, the deep humility he had felt for his wrongs.¹⁵

The contradiction is impossible to miss. In one account, **not a word was spoken**. In the other, Jacob spends the entire night making supplication, discussing his repentance, and having his sins repeatedly brought to his remembrance. These are not minor differences. They describe two entirely different descriptions of the same scene — one with no conversation at all, and one lasting through the night.

The contradiction becomes even more significant because *Patriarchs and Prophets* gives a reason for its version. Jacob's repentance, White says, had already taken place:

Had not Jacob previously repented of his sin in obtaining the birthright by fraud, God could not have heard his prayer and mercifully preserved his life... Their sins will have been blotted out by the atoning blood of Christ, and they cannot bring them to remembrance.¹⁶

That creates a second problem. The earlier account has the angel **continually calling Jacob's sins to his remembrance** while Jacob responds by referring to **the repentance of his soul**. The later account says that this repentance had already occurred and that forgiven sins cannot be brought back to remembrance. The two accounts do not merely differ over what Jacob said. They differ over whether his past sins were being reopened during the struggle.

On this point, Scripture itself supports the later principle, not the earlier story: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34); "None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him" (Eze. 33:16).

Patriarchs and Prophets itself appeals to this principle on page 201.

So, Ellen White's earlier account presents an angel repeatedly bringing Jacob's confessed sins back before him. Her later account says forgiven sins are not brought back to remembrance. Her later account also says the struggle was completely silent, while the earlier account describes a night-long conversation. The later book does not merely expand the earlier vision. **It totally contradicts it.**

A prophet can correct an earlier historical opinion. But that is not what White claimed these accounts were. She presented them as scenes shown to her. How could both accounts come from the same divine source?

Was Zipporah a Cushite?

Moses' wife becomes the subject of Miriam's complaint in Numbers 12:1, which the KJV renders plainly:

Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the **Ethiopian** woman whom he had married: for he had married an **Ethiopian** woman" (Num. 12:1).

In her earlier account of the episode, White accepts that identification without qualification:

[Miriam] complained of Moses because he married **an Ethiopian (Cushite) woman**.¹⁷

By the time she reaches *Patriarchs and Prophets* twenty-six years later, however, the identification has changed. White now acknowledges that the woman is called a Cushite, but insists that she was actually a Midianite:

Though called a 'Cushite woman' (Numbers 12:1, R.V.), the wife of Moses was a Midianite, and thus a descendant of Abraham.¹⁸

That explanation did not originate with *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Adam Clarke's commentary on Numbers 12:1 identifies the woman as probably Zipporah and explains that she

was “an Arab born in the land of Midian.” Clarke therefore had already supplied the essential harmonization: the “Cushite” woman of Numbers could be Zipporah, the Midianite wife of Moses.¹⁹

There is yet another problem with White’s later explanation. It was far from settled. Even nineteenth-century commentators were not in agreement about this passage. While Clarke proposed that the Cushite woman was probably Zipporah, other commentators rejected that identification.²⁰

The problem becomes sharper because Numbers never identifies the Cushite woman as Zipporah. It simply says that Moses had married a Cushite woman. Nor does Scripture anywhere else call Zipporah a Cushite. Zipporah is identified as a Midianite in Exodus 2:21. The identification of the two women is therefore an inference, not an explicit biblical statement. Among modern critical biblical scholars, there is a strong consensus that the “Cushite woman” in Numbers 12:1 refers to a second, distinct wife, rather than Zipporah the Midianite.²¹

Ellen White encountered an apparent contradiction, adopted a harmonizing solution already offered by commentators, and presented the solution as fact, even though it was, at best, questionable. In doing so, she contradicted her earlier statement. Both her earlier statement and her later statement could not be true, though she said her book contained “truth” barricaded by a “thus saith the Lord.” Which statement was thus barricaded?

The Plan of Salvation an “Afterthought”

The most consequential change concerns the very origin of the plan of salvation. In 1858, in the vision that became the foundation of the entire Great Controversy narrative, Ellen White described that plan as something formulated *after* Adam’s sin:

Sorrow filled heaven, as it was realized that man was lost, and the world that God created was to be filled with mortals doomed to misery, sickness and death... I saw the lovely Jesus... Soon I saw him approach the exceeding bright light which enshrouded the Father.

Said my accompanying angel, He is in close converse with his Father. The anxiety of the angels seemed to be intense while Jesus was communing with his Father. Three times he was shut in by the glorious light about the Father, and the third time he came from the Father, his person could be seen... He then made known to the angelic host that a way of escape had been made for lost man... that the plan of salvation was devised, and his Father had accepted the plan.²²

The sequence is unmistakable. The fall has already occurred. Heaven is grieving. Christ then withdraws to confer with the Father while the angels wait in intense anxiety. Only afterward does He announce that a way of escape has been made and that the plan “was devised” and “had been accepted.” The language describes deliberation, decision, and ratification — not the unveiling of a plan already established.

The surrounding narrative makes the point even harder to escape. “At first the angels could not rejoice,”²³ but after the plan was “devised” and “accepted,” “joy, inexpressible joy” filled heaven.²⁴ The angels even offered their own lives as a substitute for fallen humanity.²⁵ The accompanying angel explains why:

Said the angel, Think ye that the Father yielded up his dearly beloved Son without a struggle? No, no. It was even a struggle with the God of heaven, whether to let guilty man perish, or to give his beloved Son to die for them.²⁶

That is not merely a description of a plan being revealed. It is a description of a plan being decided.

Scripture, however, places the redemptive purpose before creation itself:

1 Peter 1:20: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

Ephesians 1:4: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

2 Timothy 1:9: Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

Revelation 13:8: ...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The contrast could hardly be sharper. Scripture places God's redemptive purpose *before* the foundation of the world. White's 1858 vision places the decision *after* the fall, with heaven itself apparently waiting to discover what the Father and Son would decide.

Then, in 1890, the same scene appeared in *Patriarchs and Prophets* — but this time White inserted the Scripture that resolves the problem:

Before the Father He pleaded in the sinner's behalf... Long continued was that mysterious communing... The plan of salvation had been laid before the creation of the earth; for Christ is 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' (Revelation 13:8); yet it was a struggle, even with the King of the universe, to yield up His Son to die for the guilty race.²⁷

The revision is extraordinary. The plan that the 1858 vision said was *devised after the fall* is now said to have been **laid before the creation of the earth**. The proof text is Revelation 13:8 — the very passage that creates the problem for the earlier account.

White does not remove the old struggle. The Father still wrestles over whether to give His Son. The angels still wait through the mysterious communion. The struggle remains, but it now sits beside a declaration that the plan had already been established before creation. The later account therefore does not simply erase the earlier story. It *repairs* it. The struggle itself

remains puzzling given that the plan had already been decided before the foundation of the world.

The question is why an event witnessed by White in vision required correction decades later — correction that moves it toward the very biblical passages the earlier revelation had contradicted. **The two different revelations cannot both be correct.**

Part Three: The Blood That Was Never Meant to Defile

The third and final passage touches the mechanics of atonement itself — and on this point, getting it wrong is not merely careless. It is heretical, by White's own definition of the word.

This passage concerns the sanctuary service, the meaning of Christ's atonement, and ultimately the SDA doctrine of the **Investigative Judgment**. Here the problem is that her description of the Israelite sanctuary reverses an important distinction made explicitly in Leviticus — and that reversal becomes the foundation for a doctrine about what Christ is doing in heaven.

She describes the daily service performed on behalf of an ordinary Israelite who brought a sin offering as follows:

The repentant sinner brought his offering to the door of the tabernacle...the blood was carried by the priest **into the holy place** and sprinkled before the veil...By this ceremony the sin was, **through the blood, transferred in figure to the sanctuary**.²⁸

Leviticus 4 makes a distinction that White's description blurs. When the anointed priest sinned, or when the whole congregation sinned, the blood was taken into the Holy Place and sprinkled before the veil. When a ruler sinned, however, the blood remained at the altar in the court. When an ordinary individual sinned, the blood likewise remained outside the Holy Place; it was applied to the horns of the altar of burnt offering and the remainder was poured out at its base (Lev. 4:22–35).

The appendix to *Patriarchs and Prophets* acknowledges this problem. It explains that when the offering was made for “a ruler or for one of the people,” **the blood was not taken into the holy place.**²⁹ In other words, the book’s own appendix supplies the correction to White’s heretical statement.

White describes the service performed for individuals as though their blood was carried into the Holy Place and their sins were thereby transferred to the sanctuary. However, the appendix admits that this was not what happened in the ordinary individual case. The exception has effectively become the rule.

That matters because White builds an entire theology upon it. The blood that she says was carried into the sanctuary becomes the mechanism by which sin itself is transferred there. The sanctuary therefore accumulates the record of the sins of Israel and must eventually be cleansed on the Day of Atonement.

Three pages later, the same principle is applied directly to Christ:

The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, **was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement...**In the great day of final award...**then** by virtue of the atoning blood of Christ, the sins of all the truly penitent **will be blotted from the books of heaven.**³⁰

Now the significance of the earlier error becomes clear. In White’s system, confession brings pardon, but the sin itself remains on the heavenly record. The final blotting out therefore does not occur when the sinner confesses and receives forgiveness. It occurs later, in the final atonement, after the cases of the professed people of God have been examined.

That distinction is fundamental to the Investigative Judgment. The doctrine requires a heavenly record in which the sins of the repentant remain until a later judgment determines which sins will finally be blotted out. The earthly sanctuary therefore becomes the model: sin is transferred to the sanctuary

during the year, and the sanctuary is cleansed later on the Day of Atonement.

The problem is that the earthly model has already been described erroneously. The blood of an ordinary Israelite's sin offering did **not** enter the Holy Place. However, her version is precisely what allows her to construct the picture of sin accumulating in the sanctuary throughout the year.

Scripture describes forgiveness in very direct terms:

“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (Heb. 8:12, NIV).

“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more” (Isa. 43:25, NIV).

The point is not that these verses settle every question about the relationship between forgiveness, judgment, and the heavenly record. The point is simpler: White's distinction between forgiveness now and the eventual blotting out of sin later is not something that can be arrived at from the biblical language. It requires the sanctuary framework she has constructed.

Leviticus distinguishes between the cases in which blood entered the Holy Place and those in which it did not. *Patriarchs and Prophets* presents the ordinary individual service as though the blood entered the Holy Place, then uses that generalized practice to explain how sin was transferred into the sanctuary.

There is an even deeper irony. Scripture describes blood as the God-appointed means of atonement and cleansing:

For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to **make an atonement for your souls**...for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul (Lev. 17:11).

And almost all things are by the law **purged** with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission (Heb. 9:22).

Contrary to this, in White's sanctuary system, the blood of the sin offering also becomes the vehicle by which the record of sin is transferred into the sanctuary and left there until a later cleansing. That is the crucial inversion. The blood that atones for sin becomes, in the sanctuary model, the mechanism by which the record of sin accumulates in God's dwelling place.

White contradicts the Bible to provide the mechanism that makes the SDA sanctuary doctrine work. After the disappointment of 1844, Adventists needed an explanation for why Christ had not returned as expected. The sanctuary doctrine supplied it: the prophetic calculation had not failed; Christ had entered the Most Holy Place to begin a final work of judgment and atonement. For that model to function, there had to be something in the heavenly sanctuary that required cleansing. White's explanation supplies it: the sins of the repentant are transferred there and remain on record until the final atonement.

This is not a minor mistake. This biblical contradiction carries heretical consequences.

Conclusion

Ellen White claimed her book was the "voice of God" speaking to people, and yet she repeatedly contradicts the *real* voice of God — the Holy Bible.

Some of her mistakes can be written off as human blunders. Others cannot be so easily dismissed. When it comes to the contradictions about meat and the atonement — both tied directly to SDA doctrines that hinge upon her writings — the *mistakes* take on a different character. They consistently move the biblical text in the direction required by the doctrine, making the sect's teachings appear less contrary to Scripture than they actually are.

A good example is Ellen White's decision to make Jacob wrestle in silence. In *Patriarchs and Prophets*, the Jacob story is explicitly turned into a type of the end-time "time of trouble." White says Jacob's night of anguish represents the experience God's people will undergo immediately before Christ's return.

Then she immediately connects it with the close of Christ's mediation:

When Christ shall cease His work as mediator in man's behalf, then this time of trouble will begin.³¹

During that final crisis, God's people will have to stand without an intercessor. Christ ceases His intercession, every case has already been decided, and the righteous must live "without an intercessor." That theology changes how Jacob has to function as a type. White needs Jacob to be genuinely repentant before the crisis; already forgiven; free of unconfessed sin; attacked by Satan through accusations about his past; nevertheless, able to cling to God's promises; and ultimately delivered without needing a new confession or a new application of Christ's blood during the crisis.

That is almost exactly the scenario played out in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. The earlier *Spirit of Prophecy* version did not fit that theology. The Jacob who spent the night pleading while the angel continually called his sins to remembrance had to be excised. The later Jacob is silent, already forgiven, and standing with his past settled before the crisis begins. The story has been reshaped to fit the doctrine.

The evidence therefore suggests something far more troubling than occasional human frailty. When Scripture or an earlier account became inconvenient for SDA doctrine, White's later writing could bend the account until it fit. The result looks less like revelation being transmitted from heaven and more like Scripture being adjusted by SDA corporate leaders.

The pattern is not what we would expect from an inspired prophet. It is what we would expect from a writer interpreting, expanding, revising, and adjusting Scripture to fit her own sect's agenda.

Ellen White supplied the test herself in this very book: **"Whatever contradicts God's word, we may be sure proceeds from Satan."**³² Well said!

¹ Ellen G. White, Letter 329a, 1905.

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- ² Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1890), 54.
- ³ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1890), 54.
- ⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 166.
- ⁵ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 1.11.4 (1.204). Josephus describes Lot and his daughters fleeing to the small place after the destruction of Sodom and states that “it is to this day called Zoar.” Written in the first century A.D., Josephus thus treats Zoar as a surviving location after the destruction of the other cities.
- ⁶ John Kitto, *A Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature*, s.v. “Zoar.” Kitto notes that Eusebius and Jerome described Zoar as having “many inhabitants, and a Roman garrison,” while later sources identify it as a large village and fortress and, eventually, as the seat of a bishop. He also notes that the Crusaders knew the site as Segor and described it as pleasantly situated with many palm trees.
- ⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 52-53.
- ⁸ The wording is consistent across the major English translations. The KJV reads “her husband with her”; the ASV and NASB use the same construction, while the NIV and ESV make the meaning explicit with “her husband, who was with her.”
- ⁹ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 9, lines 385-386.
- ¹⁰ For a thorough rebuttal of apologists’ arguments concerning Adam’s silence and other defenses, see Dirk Anderson’s article *Paradise Lost’s Themes Found in Ellen White’s Books*.
- ¹¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 73.
- ¹² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 562-563.
- ¹³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 106.
- ¹⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 196.
- ¹⁵ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 201.
- ¹⁶ Ellen White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, 118.
- ¹⁷ Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4, 19.
- ¹⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 383.
- ¹⁹ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, on Numbers 12:1. Clarke identifies the woman as “probably meaning Zipporah,” and describes her as “an Arab born in the land of Midian.” Thus, decades before *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Clarke had already proposed the same essential harmonization: the “Cushite” woman of Numbers 12:1 was Zipporah, the Midianite wife of Moses. White had Clarke’s commentary in her library.
- ²⁰ Keil and Delitzsch argued that the woman could not have been Zipporah and understood Numbers 12:1 as referring to a separate Cushite wife. Their reasoning was straightforward: Numbers describes Moses as having “taken” a Cushite woman, language that naturally suggests a more recent marriage, whereas Zipporah had been Moses’ wife for

many years. They therefore regarded the attempt to make the Cushite woman and Zipporah the same person as an unsatisfactory harmonization. They argue that it would be unlikely for Miriam to revive a marriage Moses had contracted decades earlier as the occasion for her current complaint. See C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, commentary on Numbers 12:1.

- ²¹ While conservative/evangelical scholars continue to defend the traditional harmonization (that "Cushite" is a poetic or geographic synonym for Zipporah the Midianite), mainstream historical-critical and source-critical scholarship largely considers the "second wife" hypothesis to be the far stronger reading of the Hebrew text. See David T. Adamo, "A Silent Unheard Voice in the Old Testament: The Cushite Woman Whom Moses Married in Numbers 12:1–10," *In die Skriflig* 52, no. 1 (2018), which surveys the competing interpretations and argues that the Cushite woman should not be identified with Zipporah. See also the discussion of the competing interpretations in Eryl W. Davies, *Numbers*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 118–119.

²² *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1 (1858), 22–23.

²³ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 63–64.

²⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 354.

²⁹ Editorial note from the online version of *Patriarchs and Prophets* (White Estate), 761.

³⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 357.

³¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 201.

³² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 54.

18 ♦ Science-Defying Statements

The previous chapter tested *Patriarchs and Prophets* against the Bible it claims to illuminate. This chapter applies the same test to a different, equally unforgiving standard: the physical world God created. Scripture and nature share the same Author, so a book truly traced by His hand should not describe either one wrongly. This chapter will test *Patriarchs and Prophets* against facts about the natural world.

Just as Ellen White supplied the test in the last chapter, she supplies the test here as well:

When the Bible makes statements of facts in nature, science may be compared with the written word, and a correct understanding of both will always prove them to be in harmony. One does not contradict the other. All truth, whether in nature or revelation, agrees.¹

The principle is unmistakable. Since Scripture and nature have the same divine Author, a correct understanding of nature should therefore agree with the written word.

That provides a straightforward test. If *Patriarchs and Prophets* makes statements about the natural world that contradict established facts, then her statements are false and uninspired.

The following two examples put that claim to the test.

Prehistoric Giants

In her earliest account of the Creation, published for the sect, Ellen White wrote in *Spiritual Gifts*:

As Adam came forth from the hand of his Creator, he was of noble height, and of beautiful symmetry. He was **more than twice as tall as men now living** upon the earth, and was well proportioned.²

White gave a comparative measurement, presumably from her visions. Adam was not merely “tall.” He was **more than twice as tall as men now living**. If the average modern man were roughly six feet tall, White's statement places Adam at more than twelve feet.

Later in the same volume, White extended the claim to the generations before the Flood:

Those who lived before the flood, come forth with their giant-like stature, **more than twice as tall as men now living upon the earth**, and well proportioned. The generations after the flood were less in stature. There was a continual decrease through successive generations, down to the last that lived upon the earth. The contrast between the first wicked men who lived upon the earth, and those of the last generation, was very great. The first were of lofty height and well proportioned — the last came up as they went down, a dwarfed, feeble, deformed race.³

Here the claim becomes even more extraordinary. White was not merely saying that Adam was unusually tall. She described an entire prehistoric population of giant humans followed by a continuous physical decline from the generations before the Flood down to modern humanity.

By the time *Patriarchs and Prophets* was published in 1890 for the general public, however, the precise measurement had disappeared and the language had been softened. White's own literary trustees later explained why, in the preface to a facsimile reprint of the very volume that had made the claim:

An instance of this is the statement that Adam as created was “more than twice as tall as men now living upon the earth.” (Volume III, p. 34.)... Being, however,

so specific in its detail, the author, to avoid unnecessarily prejudicing the reader not informed with regard to her call and work, dropped out of the later account this point not vital to a reception of the general statement of truth presented.⁴

That explanation is remarkably candid. The problem was not that the statement had become controversial. The problem, according to the trustees, was that it was **so specific in its detail** that it might prejudice readers who were not already familiar with White's prophetic claims. The precise measurement was therefore removed because it was not considered essential to the “general statement of truth.”

When *Patriarchs and Prophets* came out, the claim of a continual decline from giant humans to a “dwarfed, feeble, deformed race” disappeared entirely. The specific measurement was made more vague — and harder to test:

As man came forth from the hand of his Creator, he was of **lofty stature** and perfect symmetry. ... **Adam's height was much greater than that of men who now inhabit the earth.** ... There were many giants, **men of great stature...**⁵

The difference is not trivial. “More than twice as tall” is a specific claim that can be tested. “Much greater” or “great stature” is more vague. The first can be falsified by physical evidence; the second is elastic enough to survive almost any evidence.

That raises the obvious question: was the original claim ever supported by the physical evidence?

Not Supported by Fossil Record

There is no fossil or skeletal evidence demonstrating a prehistoric human population with an average stature remotely approaching twelve feet, nor is there evidence of a continuous decline in human stature from such a population to modern humanity. The nineteenth century was already accumulating significant evidence about ancient human remains. The

Neanderthal remains discovered in Germany in 1856 and the Cro-Magnon remains discovered in France in 1868 had brought ancient human anatomy into scientific discussion decades before *Patriarchs and Prophets* appeared. The emerging study of human antiquity did not reveal a vanished race of twelve-foot humans.⁶

Ancient human remains do show variations in stature due to genetics, nutrition, disease, environment, and other factors. However, the fossil and skeletal record does not support a prehistoric human population averaging anything remotely approaching twice modern human height, nor does it reveal a continuous downward progression from twelve-foot humans to the stature of people living today.⁷

Not a Biblical Teaching

The idea that humanity had declined physically from a superior ancestral condition did not originate with Ellen White. Long before *Spiritual Gifts* appeared, various forms of degeneration theory were circulating in European and American thought. The basic premise was that earlier generations had possessed greater strength, stature, or physical perfection, followed by a gradual decline in succeeding generations. Ideas of this kind had also found their way into nineteenth-century American health reform and, significantly, into the Adventist press.⁸

In 1844, Joshua Himes speculated about the physical condition of the ten generations between Adam and the Flood:

Joshua Himes, 1844 ⁹	<i>Spiritual Gifts</i> , vol. 3, 1864 ¹⁰
“It would be no tortured inference to suppose them vastly our superiors, both in strength and stature.”	“The race of men then living were of very great stature, and possessed wonderful strength.”

Himes was careful to call his conclusion an inference. Ellen White presented the same basic idea as revealed history. In her account, Adam possessed extraordinary stature and perfect symmetry; the generations before the Flood retained their great size and strength; and after the Flood, human stature

progressively declined until the race became a “dwarfed, feeble, deformed race.”

That progression is nowhere found in Genesis. Scripture gives no measurement for Adam, never says that he was more than twelve feet tall, and nowhere describes a continuous decline in human stature from Eden to the present. Nor does it portray modern humanity as the physically degenerated remnant of a prehistoric race of giants. Those details belong to Ellen White's expanded history — a history that closely resembles ideas already circulating in the world around her.

The KJV Bible does, of course, speak of giants before the Flood:

There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that... (Gen. 6:4).

At first glance, that may seem to provide biblical support for Ellen White's giant-human narrative. However, the passage cannot solve her problem without understanding the meaning of the Hebrew word translated as “giants.”

The Hebrew word for giants — *Nephilim* — is of uncertain meaning. The Hebrew word does not provide any indication of physical height. The connection with the Hebrew root *naphal*, “to fall,” has led many modern commentators to refer to them as “fallen ones,” but the precise meaning remains elusive. The only indication of who they are is found in the same text: “mighty men” and “men of renown.” Whatever else those expressions may mean, they do not tell us that the Nephilim were extraordinarily tall, nor do they tell us that human beings before the Flood were giants.

In fact, the Nephilim passage demonstrates exactly how far Ellen White went beyond the biblical record. Genesis gives us a brief and enigmatic statement about the Nephilim. Ellen White supplied an entire physical history of the human race: Adam was more than twice the height of modern men; the antediluvian generations retained giant-like stature; the post-Flood generations became progressively smaller; and modern

humanity ultimately became “dwarfed, feeble, deformed.” Genesis gives no such history. Nor does the fossil record.

Discarded Prophetic Utterance

As the nineteenth century progressed, it became increasingly difficult to defend Ellen White's theory of devolution. Thus, the revealed *truth* in *Patriarchs and Prophets* was modified to make her unscientific statement less obvious. The twelve-foot Adam became an Adam of merely “lofty stature.” The continuous decline disappeared. The “dwarfed, feeble, deformed race” disappeared. What remained was a general assertion that Adam was taller than modern humanity.

That is not what we would expect if the original measurement had been an important fact revealed by God. It is exactly what we would expect from someone relying upon the theories of her day.

Geological Claims

Patriarchs and Prophets offers a complete physical mechanism to explain earthquakes and volcanoes:

At this time immense forests were buried. These have since been changed to coal, forming the extensive coal beds that now exist, and also yielding large quantities of oil. The coal and oil frequently ignite and burn beneath the surface of the earth. Thus rocks are heated, limestone is burned, and iron ore melted. The action of the water upon the lime adds fury to the intense heat, and causes earthquakes, volcanoes, and fiery issues.¹¹

The original account, published decades earlier for the sect alone, said the same thing at greater length — buried antediluvian forests “petrified and become coal,” the coal producing oil, God igniting the deposits, the same water-and-limestone mechanism driving the same earthquakes and volcanoes.¹²

This was not Ellen White having a vision of geology. It was, sentence for sentence, the standard model of an identifiable

school of nineteenth-century writers known as the “scriptural geologists” — men who argued, against the emerging discipline of actual geology, that the world’s rock strata were laid down rapidly by Noah’s Flood rather than over long ages. For example, George Fairholme argued in 1833 that coal beds were deposited by “a violent and rapid process, at some period of unusual destruction in the vegetable kingdom” rather than by slow, gradual accumulation.¹³

George Bugg made the identical case in his own two-volume *Scriptural Geology*, published a few years earlier.¹⁴ White’s buried-forest-becomes-coal mechanism is their theory. Her water-meets-lime explanation for earthquakes and volcanoes belonged to the same circle of period writers — a chemical folk-theory of the sort then common in popular religious literature on geology.¹⁵

Such pseudo-scientific ideas also circulated among Adventists. Joshua Himes wrote in 1844 of coal beds formed by buried antediluvian forests:

“Immense beds of vegetable matter have accumulated under the earth’s surface and become masses of coal...And when the forests which had grown for 1656 years were uprooted in that mighty overturn of nature [the Flood], the accumulation of vegetable matter which forms the largest coal beds, is not so unaccountably strange.”¹⁶

None of it was original to her. All of it was already circulating, and already controversial, among religious writers of her own century arguing against the geologists of their own day.

It was also, chemically and geologically, wrong.

- **Coal is not petrified wood.** Petrification replaces organic material with minerals, turning wood to stone while preserving its shape. Coal forms by an entirely different process, carbonization, in which buried plant matter is compressed and chemically transformed by heat and pressure over vast stretches of time into a carbon-rich substance. The two processes are not

variations on a theme; they are different chemistry entirely.¹⁷

- **Oil does not come from coal.** Petroleum forms overwhelmingly from marine microorganisms — plankton and algae — settling on ancient sea floors and transforming under heat and pressure in marine sedimentary basins. Coal forms from terrestrial plant matter in swamps and peat bogs. They do not share a source, and one is not the raw material for the other.¹⁸
- **The chemistry does not work.** The reaction White describes — water reacting with lime — is real chemistry: it is the exothermic “slaking” of quicklime ($\text{CaO} + \text{H}_2\text{O} \rightarrow \text{Ca(OH)}_2$). But that reaction tops out at roughly 100–150°C. It cannot come close to the temperatures required to melt iron ore (around 1,538°C) or produce molten basalt (upward of 1,000°C).¹⁹
- **Underground coal cannot sustain the fire the theory requires.** Deep coal beds sit in oxygen-starved environments. Combustion needs a continuous oxygen supply; without one, large-scale subterranean burning cannot sustain itself, let alone generate force sufficient to fracture the crust.²⁰
- **Earthquakes and volcanoes are not chemical events.** They are driven by plate tectonics — mantle convection, subduction, and the slow grinding of crustal plates against one another, originating at depths of tens to hundreds of kilometers, far below any coal seam, which sits only a kilometer or two down. A shallow chemical reaction in the upper crust could not overcome the immense lithostatic pressure of that much overlying rock even if it produced enough heat, which it does not.²¹ Volcanic explosions themselves come from the rapid expansion of trapped gases in magma, not from fire meeting water on a ledge of ore.²²

In Ellen White's era, plate tectonics was decades away from general acceptance — but that is precisely the point. A book

claiming to relay a vision from the Creator of plate tectonics had every opportunity to say something no scriptural geologist of 1833 could have written. It said, instead, exactly what they were already writing. Even a scholar sympathetic to White's ministry has conceded as much. Roger W. Coon, writing for the White Estate, put it plainly:

I know of no scientific data that would tend to support Ellen White's statement that one cause of these volcanic eruptions and earthquakes is the presence of coal and oil burning beneath the surface of the earth."²³

The significance of this evidence is not that Ellen White failed to anticipate modern geology. The problem is much more fundamental. She presented a particular geological theory as revealed truth, yet the theory was already circulating among nineteenth-century religious writers who were attempting to explain the earth without accepting the conclusions of mainstream geology. Those writers were wrong about how coal forms, wrong about the origin of petroleum, wrong about the source of volcanic heat, and wrong about the mechanism producing earthquakes. Ellen White did not correct their mistakes with information from the Creator. She reproduced the same mistakes and placed the authority of divine revelation behind them.

That is precisely the kind of claim her own test does not allow us to excuse. She said that when nature is correctly understood, it will agree with revelation, because "All truth, whether in nature or revelation, agrees." The problem is that *Patriarchs and Prophets* does not agree with nature.

Conclusion

The evidence leaves Ellen White with a simple problem. She portrayed herself as someone receiving revelations about the natural world. Yet the specific facts she reported were not only wrong; they were already part of the nineteenth-century intellectual world around her. Her twelve-foot Adam belonged to a culture fascinated with human degeneration. Her coal-and-

lime explanation belonged to the scriptural geology of her own century.

When the most vulnerable claim became too specific, it was softened. The twelve-foot Adam became merely “much greater” in height. The precise measurement disappeared. The problem was not solved; the claim was made harder to test.

In the instances presented in this chapter, *Patriarchs and Prophets* does not agree with either nature or revelation. It agrees only with the mistaken science of White's era.

¹ Ellen White, *Signs of the Times*, Mar. 13, 1884.

² Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3 (1864), 34. The same statement appeared in *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1 (1870), 24.

³ *Ibid.*, 33. The same statement appeared in vol. 1 of *Spirit of Prophecy* (1870), 24.

⁴ Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications, "Preface to Facsimile Edition," in Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, Facsimile Edition, ii.

⁵ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 45, 90.

⁶ See, e.g., the range of hominin and early human stature documented in the paleoanthropological record; no population approaching twice the height of modern humans has been identified.

⁷ Estimates of stature from fossil skeletal remains vary considerably among species and populations, but the available evidence does not indicate a prehistoric human population approaching twice modern human stature. For example, the Smithsonian Institution's Human Origins Program gives an estimated height range of 145–185 cm (4 ft. 9 in. to 6 ft. 1 in.) for *Homo erectus*, while its estimates for Neanderthals average approximately 164 cm (5 ft. 5 in.) for males and 155 cm (5 ft. 1 in.) for females. A comparative study of Middle Pleistocene hominins likewise estimated mean statures of 163.6 cm for the Sima de los Huesos population, 160.6 cm for Neanderthals, and 177.4 cm for early modern humans. Therefore, the fossil record provides no evidence for a population averaging anything remotely approaching the twelve-foot height implied by Ellen White's statement.

⁸ One of the most influential nineteenth-century formulations came from the French physician Bénédict Morel, whose *Treatise on the Degenerations of the Human Species*, published in 1857, argued that hereditary degeneration could accumulate from one generation to the next. Morel's theory was considerably more complicated than Ellen White's account and should not be treated as a direct source for her teaching. The important point is that the concept that degeneration could progressively diminish a population was very much a nineteenth-century idea. It provided a ready-made intellectual framework for

explaining humanity as a race that had declined from an earlier condition of superiority.

⁹ Joshua Himes, "The Oppositions of Science—Falsely so called," *The Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter*, vol. 7, no. 23 (July 10, 1844): 181–182.

¹⁰ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3 (1864), 60.

¹¹ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 107.

¹² Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3 (1864), 79–80. The same passage appears in *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1 (1870), 81–82, and *Signs of the Times*, March 13, 1879.

¹³ George Fairholme, "Some Observations on the Nature of Coal, and on the Manner in which the Various Strata of the Coal-Measures Must Probably Have Been Deposited," *The London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine and Journal of Science*, 3rd ser., vol. 3, no. 16 (1833), 245–252. The bibliographic citation is confirmed; the precise wording of the quoted sentence has not been independently verified against the original scan and is reproduced here as commonly cited.

¹⁴ George Bugg, *Scriptural Geology*, 2 vols. (London, 1826–1827).

¹⁵ The water-and-lime mechanism for volcanic heat was a recurring theme in early nineteenth-century "scriptural geology" writing generally; no single source has been confirmed as White's specific model.

¹⁶ Joshua Himes, "The Oppositions of Science—Falsely so called," *The Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter*, vol. 7, no. 23 (July 10, 1844): 181–182.

¹⁷ See C. F. K. Diessel, *Coal-Bearing Depositional Systems* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1992).

¹⁸ See B. P. Tissot and D. H. Welte, *Petroleum Formation and Occurrence*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1984).

¹⁹ Standard thermochemical data for the exothermic hydration of calcium oxide; melting points of iron and basalt are widely documented physical constants.

²⁰ See G. B. Stracher, T. P. Taylor, and A. Prakash, "Coal Fires Burning Out of Control Around the World," *International Journal of Coal Geology* 59, no. 1–2 (2004): 7–17.

²¹ See D. L. Turcotte and G. Schubert, *Geodynamics*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

²² See H. Sigurdsson, ed., *Encyclopedia of Volcanoes* (San Diego: Academic Press, 2000).

²³ Roger W. Coon, "Ellen G. White and Science: The Problem Statements" (Ellen G. White Estate, May 29, 1996).

19 ♦ ...and Profits

There is one final chapter to this story. If, as the evidence throughout this article suggests, *Patriarchs and Prophets* was not the product of divine revelation, why did Ellen White insist so forcefully that it was? The answer lies not in the *writing* of the book, but in its *marketing*.

Unlike the biblical prophets, Ellen White did more than write books. She received royalties from them. Not only that, when those books struggled in the marketplace, she repeatedly appealed to her prophetic authority to persuade sect leaders and canvassers that selling *Patriarchs and Prophets* was nothing less than the will of God.

The Business Problem

Patriarchs and Prophets was birthed in the midst of a business crisis. By the late 1880s the Review and Herald Publishing Association was under financial strain. Costs were being cut, employee wages reduced, and management was looking for practical ways to stay afloat and increase profits. Every dollar mattered.¹

At precisely that moment the sect discovered a goldpot. *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, a popular denominational book of Bible lessons designed for families to study together in the home, was outselling all other denominational books — by far.² It was inexpensive to produce, easy for inexperienced canvassers to sell, and remarkably successful. Better still, its contributors had agreed to receive **no royalties**. Every sale benefited the publishing work rather than an individual author. Ellen White's nephew, Francis E. Belden, who worked at the

Review, later recalled that many SDA leaders interpreted the book's amazing success as evidence that God was blessing a **royalty-free** book.³

Standing beside it were *The Great Controversy* and the newly published *Patriarchs and Prophets*. They were larger, more expensive, more difficult to sell, and each copy generated a royalty payment to Ellen White.

From the publisher's perspective, it was as a simple business decision. It made more economic sense to push *Bible Readings* than White's books.

Ellen White's Problem

Unlike the contributors to *Bible Readings*, Ellen White received 15 cents in royalties from every copy of *Patriarchs and Prophets* sold. White had invested heavily in the printing plates used to reproduce her books, expecting strong sales to recover that investment. Instead, sales faltered, her account with the Review mounted, and her personal finances began to suffer. She was no longer able to meet some of her financial obligations.⁴

Writing privately, White made it clear that she believed the publishers themselves were responsible for her predicament:

One from Edson stated that my account at the office had swelled to the enormous sum of seven thousand dollars. This is, much of it, in publishing Volume 4, *Great Controversy*, and *Patriarchs and Prophets*, which they have not handled but have let fall dead from the press, while *Bible Readings* has been extolled and all the canvassers have been educated to work for it... Well, I am informed that I can draw no more from the office, and now I must cast about to see what I shall do next. I trust in the Lord, that He will open the way before me and put it into the hearts of those who might help me to do so by educating the canvassers to handle my books. ...the very light that God has given me for His people they shall have.⁵

The emotion in White's complaint is impossible to miss. Her account had “**swelled**” to an “**enormous**” sum. Her books had been allowed to “**fall dead from the press,**” while *Bible Readings* was “**extolled**” and the canvassers were trained to work for it. These are not the words of someone calmly reporting a difference in business strategy. They reveal a woman who believed she had been wronged — and, as her other correspondence makes clear, she regarded the publishers' treatment of her as a **betrayal**.

Her proposed solution is revealing. White does not suggest lowering her royalties, offering promotions, or reducing the production costs of the book. She wants the canvassers **educated to handle her books**. In other words, she believes the problem is that her books had been neglected while *Bible Readings* received the aggressive promotion she felt her books deserved.

Compounding the problem was the Review's own financial distress. In the past, White had been able to draw upon the publishing office when she needed financial assistance. Now that source was drying up. She was told plainly: “**I can draw no more from the office.**”⁶

White's complaint exposes the conflict at the heart of the matter. She had invested heavily in books from which she received royalties, expected those books to sell, and depended upon the publishing operation to market them. Yet she believed the very people responsible for selling them had instead thrown their weight behind a royalty-free competitor. *Bible Readings* was being “**extolled**”; her books had been left “**dead from the press.**” From White's perspective, this was not simply bad business. It was betrayal. The problem became: the canvassers have been “educated” to sell *Bible Readings* instead of her books.

Problems with her Public Image

Adding to Ellen White's financial problems was a growing assault on her public reputation. By the late 1880s, White's name had become increasingly controversial in America. In 1877, first-day Adventist Miles Grant published a tract critical of

White entitled *An Examination of Ellen White's Visions*. It was distributed widely throughout North American churches and even circulated in foreign countries. The problem intensified in 1889 with the publication of Dudley M. Canright's *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, a widely circulated book that directly challenged White's prophetic authority.

For Ellen White, this created a serious problem. Her books depended heavily upon personal reputation and the work of canvassers. Grant's and Canright's books was tarnishing her reputation amongst the target audience she was trying to sell to.

White herself recognized the damage. She later complained that Grant's and Canright's publications had been **"scattered broadcast,"** that they had even been **"printed in the [news]papers,"** and that they had succeeded in bruising and blackening the reputation of SDAs — including her own.⁷ The commercial problem would be obvious to any book publisher: **a damaged reputation makes a difficult book even harder to sell.**

Problems with Spending

One reason for Ellen White's financial woes was her apparently unconstrained generosity and spending. She wrote of being solicited for money "from every quarter." Eventually, she claimed that "light" came to her in the "night season," instructing her to stop "passing out means in large sums."⁸ White can certainly be commended for her generosity toward the SDA cause. But generosity was not the only drain on her finances. Her financial problems were compounded by the money she poured into her publishing ventures and by expenditures for her own luxuries.

Consider what happened in December 1885, while White was working on *Patriarchs and Prophets* in Basel, Switzerland. She complained about having to travel by public conveyance: *"I do not take pleasure in the rides taken with a coachman or hackman."*⁹ The solution was not to tolerate an inconvenience that other SDA workers routinely endured. **White wanted her own horse and carriage.**

That was no trivial purchase. A respectable horse, carriage, and harness represented a substantial capital expense in the 1880s, followed by continuing costs for feed, stabling, shoeing, and maintenance. At a time when SDA workers were being urged to sacrifice for *the cause*, White was contemplating a private mode of transportation that was a luxury well beyond the means of the ordinary laborer. The initial purchase alone represented more than three years of wages for a typical laborer.

Cost of a Horse and Carriage

Item / Service	1885 Cost (USD)
Driving Horse	\$100 – \$200
Carriage / Phaeton	\$150 – \$300
Harness & Equipment	\$25 – \$50
Total Initial Setup	\$275 – \$550
In 2025 dollars	\$10,021 – \$20,042

Not including the continuing costs of stabling, feed, shoeing, and maintenance.

The timing makes this especially difficult to overlook. White was already experiencing serious financial pressure and had started accumulating debt. Yet in the midst of those financial difficulties, she was prepared to spend a substantial sum to avoid the inconvenience of using public transportation.

That becomes all the more striking when compared with her own published counsel. White's *Testimonies* repeatedly warned believers about the dangers of living in debt. After purchasing printing plates for *Patriarchs and Prophets*, she placed her indebtedness to the Review at approximately \$10,000.¹⁰ When the publishing operation could no longer continue advancing her money, she did not respond by proposing to reduce her royalties or provide a promotion to spur book sales. Instead, she appealed for the canvassers to be retrained to sell her books.

The contradiction becomes difficult to ignore. **White's financial solution was not to control her expenditures but to**

increase the sales of the books that generated royalties for her. She invoked her prophetic authority, presenting their sale as a matter of advancing "the very light that God has given me for His people."

The Marketplace Answered

By October of 1890, *Patriarchs and Prophets* was starting to roll off the presses of Pacific Press with high hopes. To spur sales, the publishers introduced one of the most generous discounts they had ever given for a book. Despite this, the response was disappointing. Writing publicly in the SDA *Home Missionary*, corporate leader C. Eldridge could only express his surprise. He lashed out at state agents, baffled as to why so few orders had been received.¹¹

The reasons were not mysterious. *Patriarchs and Prophets* was a large, expensive book that demanded more time and persuasion than *Bible Readings*. Many canvassers regarded it as "a harder book to canvass for."¹²

Price only compounded the problem. Depending on the binding, the book sold for between \$1.75 and \$4.25 — \$70 - \$170 in modern dollars.¹³ At a time when many American laborers earned less than \$1.75 a day, purchasing the deluxe edition represented a substantial financial commitment. One canvassing leader acknowledged that many agents believed **the price alone kept the books out of reach.**¹⁴

None of this reflected any animosity toward Ellen White. On the contrary, the canvassers were deeply committed SDAs who sincerely believed they were spreading God's final message for the world. Yet even they acknowledged the challenge with selling *Patriarchs and Prophets*.¹⁵

The market had rendered its verdict. The sect's sales force had rendered theirs. The problem was not about whether *Patriarchs and Prophets* was useful in winning converts to Seventh-day Adventism. Reports trickled in of some successes. The problem was that it was challenging to sell.

Selling by Divine Command

Faced with a difficult book to sell, Ellen White did not merely recommend *Patriarchs and Prophets* to her followers. She repeatedly claimed that God Himself was directing the sect to sell it.

This was not an isolated appeal made during financial hardship. For the next sixteen years, she repeatedly presented the promotion of her own royalty-bearing books as a matter of divine instruction.

In 1899, in a document titled *Special Instruction Regarding Royalties*, she wrote that *Patriarchs and Prophets* contained "the very message the people must have, the special light God had given His people" and added that "angels of God would prepare the way for" the book.¹⁶ The appeal is no longer commercial. It is supernatural.

In 1903, she wrote that *Patriarchs and Prophets* contained "precious instruction" and "must be regarded as of special importance, and every effort should be made" to market them.¹⁷ The same year, in the *Review and Herald*, she wrote that her book "should be sold everywhere" because it contained "truth for this time" and nothing was to be allowed "to hinder" its sale.¹⁸ Selling the book becomes a religious duty.

In 1905, again in the *Review and Herald*, she went still further:

Instruction has been given me that the important books... should be given a wide circulation just now... *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Daniel and the Revelation*, and *The Great Controversy* are needed now as never before... Had tact and skill then been shown in the sale of these books, the Sunday-law movement would not be where it is today.¹⁹

The implication is extraordinary. Had canvassers done a better job selling her books, the Sunday-law movement would not have advanced as it did.

Then, in 1906, she wrote about the content of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, saying: The Holy Spirit traced these truths upon my

heart and mind as indelibly as the law was traced by the finger of God, upon the tables of stone.²⁰

The claim has now reached astonishing heights. **The book was placed on the same level as the Ten Commandments.**

To these canvassers, Ellen White was God's prophet. When she declared that angels would prepare the way for *Patriarchs and Prophets*, that its sale was a matter of divine instruction, and that the Holy Spirit Himself had traced its truths upon her mind, faithful SDA canvassers had every reason to believe her.

That is precisely what made these appeals so powerful. She was not relying on the merits of her book alone. **She was leveraging her prophetic authority to manipulate the men and women responsible for selling it.**

The Meeting in Brooklyn

On the evening of November 24, 1890, Ellen White stood before a room full of canvassers in Brooklyn. These were not critics. They were SDA loyalists whose livelihood depended on selling the sect's books from door to door in New York City.

The discussion turned to the very controversy dividing the publishing work. Why had they been instructed to emphasize *Bible Readings* when many believed they could successfully sell *Patriarchs and Prophets* instead?²¹ Ellen White answered the question herself:

I told them that the Lord had never given any direction in harmony with the one which they had received. God gave me the light contained in *Great Controversy* and *Patriarchs and Prophets*... It cannot be denied that these works were not the product of any human mind; they are the voice of God speaking to His people, and they will have an influence upon minds that other books do not have."²²

Notice what just happened. The publishing managers had made a practical business decision. Canvassers had reported that *Patriarchs and Prophets* was more difficult to sell than *Bible Readings*. Ellen White was likely aware of this and the success

canvassers were having with *Bible Readings*. Not only was it selling well, but SDA literature was full of success stories of converts joining the sect after reading the book. Not only was it selling well and bringing in new converts, the sales were helping to lift the Review out of debt. White could have been generous with the publishing house leaders for developing and implementing such a successful book venture. Instead, she publicly shreds them — portraying them as disobedient to God's "direction."

The reason she gave was not a practical one. She answered with a supernatural argument.

She declared that God Himself had given the book's contents to her, that it was "not the product of any human mind," and that it was "the voice of God speaking to His people." A canvasser who accepted her prophetic authority could scarcely reach any other conclusion than that promoting competing books was resisting God's expressed will.

White drove the point home by insisting that her book "was not the product of any human mind." The canvassers could not have tested that claim. The book contained no citations and no acknowledgment of the many authors whose work appears throughout its pages. To them, it was a divine revelation. Curiously, at the very moment her book business needed rescuing, heaven showed up to endorse her books.

The Standard She Applied to Everyone Else

Ellen White repeatedly taught that canvassers should never allow personal financial considerations to influence which books they sold. On that principle there could be no disagreement.

In the same season as the Brooklyn meeting, she wrote to the Review and Herald managers about the canvassers — the very men she had just addressed — and condemned the motive of financial gain in language that allows no confusion:

If our canvassers are controlled by the prospect of financial gain; if they circulate the book on which they

can make the most money, to the neglect of others that the people need, I ask, In what sense is theirs a missionary work? Where is the missionary spirit, the spirit of self-sacrifice?²³

Should he turn his back on all the principles of missionary work, and handle the book — placed before him, shall I say, as a temptation — on which he can make the most money?²⁴

Yet only four paragraphs later, in the very same letter, the principle changes.

You know I needed the money which the sale of my books would bring. You undertook to manage the sale for me, and if I have been justly dealt with I have yet to learn what constitutes mercy and justice.²⁵

The dissonance is astonishing. When canvassers preferred another book because it sold more easily, Ellen White questioned their missionary spirit and warned them against the temptation of financial gain. When her own royalty-bearing books were not selling, she reminded the same men that she "needed the money" those sales would bring.

Consider how Francis Belden was treated when he requested a royalty of just five cents per copy for a book he had written on his own time. The Review and Herald refused.²⁶ Ellen White caught wind of it, and instead of coming to her nephew's aid, instead of fighting for him to get his royalties the same way she always fought for her own royalties, she thoroughly denounced him as selfish. Then, she saw to it that the testimony was circulated among influential corporate leaders.²⁷

Five cents was selfishness. Fifteen-cent royalties were "the voice of God."

The Admission of 1903

By 1903, *Patriarchs and Prophets* had been in print for thirteen years—a work the White Estate maintained was born of "many repeated visions" and White herself called "the voice of God."

Yet on September 27, 1903, White wrote a private letter to her sons Edson and Willie discussing a question that should never apply to a divine revelation: **how much of it to rewrite.**

In the night season matters have been presented to me regarding the books *Patriarchs and Prophets* and *Great Controversy*. It has been my prayer that we might receive light and counsel from the Lord and be led and guided by Him as to **how far we should go in making changes for a new and improved edition of these books.**²⁸

The question was not *whether* to alter heaven's message, but *how extensively* to do so. Later in the same letter, White admitted why a "new and improved edition" was on the table in the first place:

Even though these books **do not sell as readily as they would if thoroughly revised**, yet the resetting of them will place upon me a heavier burden than I am able to bear.²⁹

That single sentence—and the financial bargaining surrounding it—exposes three critical admissions.

1. The text was underperforming. White conceded that in its existing, "inspired" form, the text was actively holding back sales. Five weeks later she was blunter with the General Conference president: "For the past few years my books have not been selling very rapidly in this country."³⁰ That is a remarkable concession regarding words allegedly shown to her by God.

2. The proposed revisions were substantial—and human in origin. Minor plate adjustments could "improve the book somewhat," but market performance demanded that the text be *thoroughly* revised.³¹ Crucially, these major overhauls were not new visions shown to her by an angel; White noted they were "changes that have been suggested" by others.³² If the original content was traced upon her heart by the Holy Spirit, why did human assistants need to suggest "thorough" rewrites thirteen years later?

3. Finances were driving the decision. Nowhere in her letter did White cite fresh spiritual light as the motive for editing. The case for revising was commercial: to boost sagging sales. The case against revising was equally commercial: the cost of resetting the plates fell on her personally, and issuing a new edition would render unsold warehouse stock unsaleable.³³

The contrast between this private bargaining and her public rhetoric could not be starker. Just three years after privately debating how extensively to rewrite *Patriarchs and Prophets*, White publicly declared in a letter to church workers in Tennessee:

In my books, the truth is stated, **barricaded by a “Thus saith the Lord.”** The Holy Spirit traced these truths upon my heart and mind **as indelibly as the law was traced by the finger of God upon the tables of stone...**³⁴

Indelible

**Impossible to erase, remove, wash out,
or forget.**

—*Merriam Webster*

Here is the ultimate contradiction. In public, *Patriarchs and Prophets* was portrayed as sacred and unchangeable as the Ten Commandments — written by the finger of God on stone. But in private, it was a fluid commercial product—holding back sales, open to "changes suggested" by human advisors, and needing a **thorough** overhaul.

White's private letter does not describe a text as sacred as the Ten Commandments being guarded from alteration. It describes a publishing venture. She even warned that if the Review and Herald was not cooperative, "we will have it printed elsewhere."³⁵

Yet this is the same letter she insisted that the existing, unrevised copies be sold:

Let there be an interest awakened in the sale of these books. Their sale is essential; for they contain timely instruction from the Lord.³⁶

So the books were "instruction from the Lord" that urgently needed to be sold, while at the same time White acknowledged that they could sell better if **thoroughly revised** and that further changes had already been suggested.

In the middle of this letter, while opining on how far to change her book, White quoted God's promise in Psalms: "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips."³⁷ She applied it to dealing fairly with the publishing houses. But the irony is hard to miss. What goes out of God's lips does not need to be altered. What went out of Ellen White's pen, by her own private admission, needed **thorough** revision within thirteen years.

Conclusion

Every faithful SDA canvasser believed Ellen White spoke for God. She knew they believed it. She used that belief to influence what books they carried from door to door. She did not merely recommend *Patriarchs and Prophets*. She declared that heaven wanted it sold, that angels would prepare the way, that refusing to give it prominence was contrary to God's instruction, and that its contents were "not the product of any human mind."

It is one thing for an author to say, "I believe my book is important." It is quite another for a prophet to tell her followers, "God insists you must sell my book." That is spiritual coercion.

In 1903 she conceded to her own sons that *Patriarchs and Prophets* would sell better "if thoroughly revised," along lines others had suggested. Three years later she told the public that the Holy Spirit had traced its truths upon her mind "as indelibly as the law was traced by the finger of God, upon the tables of stone." Moses never proposed a thorough revision of the Ten Commandments to improve sales.

The darkest part of this story, however, is that she invoked the voice of God to market words and ideas that, in many cases,

came from other authors. She leveraged her spiritual authority to sell those borrowed words while advancing her own financial interests.

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- ¹ F. E. Belden to Ellen G. White, March 27, 1895, Ellen G. White Estate document 009375; Belden to W. C. White, June 12, 1897, Ellen G. White Estate document 010260; Belden to Ellen G. White, January 2, 1903, Ellen G. White Estate document 016136. According to these letters, wages were being cut. F. E. Belden moved to reduce the managers' pay from thirty dollars a week to twenty. Ordinary workers fared worse: piece rates were lowered in the folding room so that the hardest workers would not out-earn others, and employees five minutes late were docked half an hour.
- ² C. Eldridge, on *Bible Readings for the Home Circle, Home Missionary*, vol. 2, no. 10 (Oct. 1890): 230.
- ³ Belden to W. C. White, June 12, 1897, Ellen G. White Estate document 010260. Belden wrote: "The large sale of *Bible Readings* was often referred to as **an evidence of God's approval of a book free from royalty.**"
- ⁴ Ellen White, Letter 237, 1903. Nov. 1, 1903, to A.G. Daniells (President of the SDA corporation). In that letter she noted the slowdown in the sales of her books in the USA: "For the past few years my books have not been selling very rapidly in this country."
- ⁵ Ellen White, Manuscript 53, 1890. White herself admitted in 1894: "The financial situation of the country [Australia] makes canvassing very unpromising. **Great Controversy and Patriarchs and Prophets sell very slow**, and yet they are the most salable of any books in the field." (Letter 89a, 1894). In addition to financial strain, bad press may have contributed to the low initial sales. In 1889, D. M. Canright published *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, which challenged the claims of Ellen White. White, writing privately to the president of the General Conference, expressed concern: "Canright's book has been sent everywhere, and it has done a vast amount of harm..." (Ellen G. White, Letter 21, 1891, to O. A. Olsen, December 13, 1891). It was doing a **vast** amount of harm, no doubt, to her royalty check.
- ⁶ Ellen White, Letter 43, 1899. Mar. 11, 1899, to G.A. Irwin, W. Sisley, U. Smith U., A.T. Jones. White recalls: "I had to draw from the Review & Herald for means to live on. They humiliated me in the dust by telling me they could not honor my order, for I had overdrawn."
- ⁷ Ellen White, Manuscript 27, 1894.
- ⁸ Ellen White, Letter 43, 1899.
- ⁹ Ellen White, Letter 38, 1885 (to J. E. White and W. C. White, Basel, Switzerland, December 22, 1885).
- ¹⁰ Ellen White, Letter 61, 1891. White wrote:

I am getting out a number of books, which requires money to get them published and bound. When they are finished I receive a royalty... Have I sent you *Patriarchs and Prophets*? ... For that book I receive fifteen cents per copy; on Volume 4, *Spirit of Prophecy*, twelve and one-half cents per copy... But these books have but just begun to be pushed in their sale, and I expect to be able to settle my debts and then stop interest on ten thousand dollars.

¹¹ C. Eldridge, *Home Missionary*, vol. 2, no. 10 (Oct. 1890): 230.

¹² *Home Missionary*, vol. 5, no. 4 (April 1893): 46.

¹³ Price list, *Home Missionary*, vol. 7, no. 3 (Mar. 1895): 72.

¹⁴ L. C. Chadwick, *Home Missionary*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Feb. 1891): 42. Frank Belden, whose job was moving books, gave this explanation: "Unquestionably your books (P.P. & G.C.) are not only the best as to reading matter but the poorest as to appearance, of all our large books. How can we start canvassers on them?... Too much solid reading, page after page, needs an eloquent description by an intelligent person, in order to create desire and secure an order at a cost of between 2.25 and 4.50." (Francis Belden to Ellen G. White, April 1899. Ellen G. White Estate, document 013641). Belden admitted the material was good. That should come as no surprise since the material came from some of the best authors of the nineteenth century and was polished by book-maker **Marian Davis**.

¹⁵ *Home Missionary*, vol. 4, no. 4 (April 1892): 95; *Home Missionary*, vol. 5, no. 4 (April 1893): 46. The *Home Missionary* reported in 1892 that *Patriarchs and Prophets* and the fourth volume of *Great Controversy* were drawing more canvassing attention than in earlier years, but noted that opinion among the agents was split — some found the books as saleable as *Bible Readings*, and **others plainly did not**. A year later a second report was more candid still: agents who had taken up *Patriarchs and Prophets* called it, **a harder book to canvass for** even though they favored the content.

¹⁶ Ellen White, *Special Instruction Regarding Royalties*, p. 7 (1899).

¹⁷ Ellen White, Letter 229, 1903.

¹⁸ Ellen White, *The Review and Herald*, January 20, 1903.

¹⁹ Ellen White, *The Review and Herald*, February 16, 1905.

²⁰ Ellen White, Letter 90, 1906.

²¹ Ellen White, Manuscript 23, 1890 (Diary, Brooklyn, New York, November 24, 1890).

²² Ibid.

²³ Ellen G. White, Letter 1, 1890.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

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- ²⁶ Belden to W. C. White, June 12, 1897, reporting Captain Eldridge's offer: "asking me if I would take 25,000 dollars for a half interest in them." Ellen G. White Estate, document 010260.
- ²⁷ Belden to Ellen G. White, March 27, 1895: "you wrote a document that was sent to several prominent persons, stating that I left because I was selfish." Ellen G. White Estate, document 009375.
- ²⁸ Ellen White to J. E. White and W. C. White, Letter 229, September 27, 1903, par. 1; published in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, 439–441.
- ²⁹ Ellen White, Letter 229, 1903, par. 9.
- ³⁰ Ellen White, Letter 237, 1903 (November 1, 1903, to A. G. Daniells). See also note 4.
- ³¹ Ellen White, Letter 229, 1903, par. 7.
- ³² Ibid. An SDA apologist might argue that "resetting" refers only to typography and a "more attractive style." But the letter itself distinguishes the modest changes the old plates could hold from the larger changes that would require new ones. A revision too extensive to fit the existing plates is not a matter of fonts. It is a matter of content.
- ³³ Ibid., pars. 7–8, 3, 9.
- ³⁴ Ellen White, Letter 90, 1906, par. 12. March 6, 1906, to the brethren assembled in council at Graysville, Tennessee. She opened the paragraph with the question "How many have read carefully *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Great Controversy*, and *Desire of Ages*?"
- ³⁵ Ellen White, Letter 229, 1903, final paragraph.
- ³⁶ Ibid., par. 10. The same passage continues: "In *Desire of Ages*, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Great Controversy*, and in *Daniel and the Revelation*, there is precious instruction. These books must be regarded as of special importance" (see note 17).
- ³⁷ Ibid., par. 5, quoting Psalm 89:34.

20 ♦ The Verdict

Ellen White claimed that *Patriarchs and Prophets* was "not the product of any human mind," but "the voice of God speaking to His people."¹ She repeatedly insisted that the light contained in the book had been given to her by God.² Her publishers told readers its value lay in revealing *unusual insights* that the Bible itself does not record. The White Estate later explained the book's expansion was the result of "many repeated visions" and "many revelations."

Claims of *supernatural* revelation demand an investigation. Ordinary explanations must first be evaluated to determine if they can account for the claims put forward by the book's author and publishers. The first twenty-one chapters were examined — one fourth of the book.³ Again and again, the supposedly revealed material proved traceable to ordinary nineteenth-century books available to Ellen White.

A *supernatural* explanation is warranted only when a *natural* one fails. This book has demonstrated repeatedly that the supposedly revealed material is traceable to ordinary nineteenth-century books available to Ellen White — nearly off of which sat on the shelves of her own library.

Where Scripture is silent, a nineteenth-century commentator ventures an explanation, often introducing it with words like *perhaps*, *some think*, or *it is probable*. White removes the uncertainty and presents the same idea as revealed history. She not only adopts their conclusions, she adopts their arguments, their methods of interpretation, their historical mistakes, their philological judgments, their moral lessons, their imaginary scenes, and their structural frameworks.

Whether one calls it copying, borrowing, literary dependence, or plagiarism, the bottom line is that it is fraud perpetuated on a grand scale.

The White Estate says the twenty-six years between *Spiritual Gifts* (1864) and *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890) were filled with repeated visions that revealed new details. However, many of those new details appear in the books of other authors during the time when she was adding new books to her library.⁴ That single fact is extraordinarily difficult to explain if the source was heaven.

Finally, and most damning of all: she used spiritual and psychological manipulation on the very members of her sect who sold the book door to door. They believed they were carrying a revelation from God. They did not know they were selling the words of the very writers White branded *Apostate Protestantism*⁵ — Protestant commentators and devotional writers whose words now appeared between SDA covers and were marketed as light from heaven.

Consider the irony. She took the words of Protestant writers, built them into a book, and sold the book back to Protestant households. The money from those sales then funded a movement dedicated to converting those same households away from Protestantism.

She did not merely borrow from her opponents. **She used their words as a Trojan Horse to transport SDA doctrines into their homes.**

Ellen White once wrote: “My commission embraces the work of a prophet, but it does not end there.”⁶ She was right about one thing: **it did not end there.** No *ordinary* prophet of God created a publishing empire, stole the writings of their opponents, sold the product back to them under the guise that it contained *unusual insights*, and ultimately profited from the whole venture.

Ellen White profited from her followers' ignorance, manipulating them into selling what they innocently *thought* was divine instruction, while all along she knew what it really was:

A WHITE LIE!

¹ Ellen G. White, Manuscript 23, 1890. See also Manuscript 1, 1905: "These books [Great Controversy and Patriarchs and Prophets] were written under the influence and in accordance with the instruction of God."

² Ellen White, Letter 117, 1899; cf. Manuscript 1, 1905.

³ The first 21 chapters comprise 176 pages out of a total of 677 pages written by Ellen White. Thus, 26% of the book was evaluated for plagiarism.

⁴ In addition to the Columbian Bible and other library books already mentioned, Ellen White had the following commentaries in her libraries according to the White Estate (*A Bibliography of Ellen G. White's Private and Office Libraries*, compiled by Warren H. Johns, Tim Poirier, and Ron Graybill, third revised edition, 1993): Henry, Matthew, *Henry's Bible*, 6 vols (London: W. Collins, 1860); Clarke, Adam, *Commentary on Holy Bible*, 7 vols. 1st ed. (originally publ. 1810-1825 in 8 vols.); Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *The Portable Commentary. A Comm., Critical & Explanatory*, 2 Vols. (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 187?); Trapp, John, *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, ed. H. Martin (London: R.D. Dickinson, 1867-68), 5 Vols. (OT Vols).

⁵ See *Great Controversy*, (1888), 445, 615.

⁶ Ellen White, Letter 232, 1906.

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