



George R. Knight's

CRISIS OF IDENTITY

OR
HOW TO READ GEORGE R. KNIGHT?

Milos Bogdanovic

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BOOK REVIEWS

Dr. George Knight has greatly contributed to the development of Adventist history and historiography. But no man is perfect, and neither is Dr. Knight. This book criticizes some of Knight's historical and theological weaknesses and provides a balancing view of Adventist theology and history. (Dojcin Zivadinovic, PhD. History of Christianity, Andrews University. Professor of Religion, Weimar Institute, California)

"George R. Knight's Crisis of Identity," by Milos Bogdanovic, provides a much-needed critical analysis of the work of George Knight -- answering his wide-spread devaluation of the significance of Ellen G. White's writings and his revisionist view of Adventist history. The author affirms the gift of prophecy through the writings of Ellen G. White as a great light which God has given to guide His people through the temptations and deceptions in the end times. To those searching for clarity about the importance and role of Ellen G. White, I recommend this book. (Janet Lundeen Neumann, a lay-speaker for Operation Iceberg, Amazing Discoveries and Secrets Unsealed. When invited she has spoken internationally regarding the inroads of the emergent church into modern-day Adventism.)

While reading of historical events in the SDA church by various authors in the past, several times they pointed out that George knight in writing of the same events has presented an interpretation at variance from what they understood to be correct. His characterization of these historical happenings, actions, intent of individuals etc., would also often be quite different from my understanding. In this critique, George Knight's Crisis of Identity by Milos Bogdanovic I have found answers to my questions as why some authors have pointed out their variance with Knight in interpretation of historical events and their meaning to the cause of the church. It is presented that George Knight sees the establishment of, growth, and mission of the church to be more of human devising and not so much of a direct leading by God. Ellen White is minimized in influence. 1 Corinthians 12: 10 lists "discerning of spirits" as one of the gifts placed in the church. I see in the text George Knight's Crisis of Identity this gift of discerning by author Milos. Brought to light is a trend of author Knight to write and interpret events and actions which allow those who's bent is toward criticism of the church to find in many historical events interpretations that fit their agenda. (Edwin A. Noyes M.D., MPH Loma Linda University, autor "Exposing Spiritualistic Practices in Healing")

INTRODUCTORY WORD

This paper presents a critical review of the series of misconceptions of Adventist historian George R. Knight.

As a main reason for forming of Adventist belief, he does not see God's intention for His church to adequately respond to the existing temptations of the world and the church community, but sees the attempt of believers to find an answer to the unconverted need of their fallen human nature for their own identity. Knight does not explain that the power of the Advent movement is in God, but that it is in the conviction and in the idea of one's own specialty. That's why he uses the term "identity crisis" which he binds for the year 1844, then 1888, and then for believers of our time, considering that the Adventist Church today has crisis of identity. I will explain that this is a projection of a personal identity crisis to other believers of the church. In this crisis there is also an explanation of why his interpretation of Adventist history is devoid of its spiritual meaning. Although he presents valuable historical facts, he interprets them in a manner devoid of spiritual meaning. History of Adventism he explains as if it is the result of the impact of various traditions that the pioneers brought in Adventism, and not God's inspired leadership where Heaven illuminates the Earth namely with that light of truth which is the answer to the real temptations that people have. Knight's complete work is, to use his own vocabulary, "spiritually neutered", without giving glory to God, to His mercy and His mighty hand that leads and saves.

The importance of the Spirit of prophecy in the formation of the doctrine of the Adventist Church, George Knight devalues, believing that the visions of Ellen White were generally the confirmation of already revealed truths, and not their explanation or even revelation. Ellen White's warnings about the subtle deceptions of the last days George Knight makes pointless, claiming that those truths, which are not clearly taught in the Bible, are not so essential that we should deal with them. By this Knight makes

meaningless the reason for the existence of the foretold Spirit of prophecy in general.

In order to relativize the belief of the church, George Knight uses in his works several notions and phrases that do not exist neither in the Holy Scriptures, nor in the works of Ellen White, nor in them are their synonyms. These are, first and foremost, the notions of “dynamic” truth, the truth that “could change” and “a search for identity”, while to the term “the present truth”, which is found in the works of Ellen White, George Knight attaches distorted relativizing meaning, as if the truth can be changeable. As we will see, the use of these terms and their meaning has its aim to relativize the Adventist belief, as if church doctrine can be changed, which opens the door to delusions of apostate Christianity, as well as to the Omega of apostasy within the Adventist community itself, which Ellen White described by the following words:

“The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization.” (EGW, 1SM 204)

We will also document the consequences of George Knight's understandings on the example of one Adventist professor of theology, in order to practically demonstrate how his delusions give an excuse for rejecting the fundamental cornerstones of truth as well as for accepting the deceptions of Spiritual formation.

We will analyze the example of the rebellious relationship of George Knight towards the General Conference in promoting the ordination of women, where he compares the President of the General Conference, through his insinuations, with the Pope, Hitler and Stalin, although he, as president, has no power to oppose the will of delegates who have largely voted for the further ban of the ordination of women for pastors.

In the following words of Ellen White we read an alarming call to examine and reject the germs of such apostasy which could be begotten in the hearts of each of us:

“For your soul’s sake, my brethren, have an eye single to the glory of God. Leave self out of your thoughts as much as possible. We are nearing the close of time. Examine your motives in the light of eternity. I know you need to be alarmed; you are departing from the old landmarks. Your science, so called, is undermining the foundation of Christian principle. I have been shown the course you would surely pursue should you disconnect from God. Do not trust to your own wisdom. I tell you, your souls are in imminent peril. For Christ’s sake, search and see why you have so little love for religious exercises. ... I know your danger. If you lose confidence in the testimonies you will drift away from Bible truth. I have been fearful that many would take a questioning, doubting position, and in my distress for your souls I would warn you. How many will heed the warning?” (EGW, 5T 98)

That George Knight, by his interpretation of the history of the Adventist people, devalues the role of Ellen White, very clearly reveal the reactions of many former Adventists to his books. Some claim that they abandoned Adventism after reading his books, while others were reading his books after their exit from Adventism and found in them justification for their departure. If Knight wasn’t bound to Adventism by the need for identity, he would probably be an open critic of Adventism, but as he himself claims that we do not have to completely agree with the doctrine of the church we belong to, he finds an excuse to stay in Adventism and to do his work within the church itself.

Naturally, although former Adventists are mostly delighted with Knight’s criticism of EGW’s position in Adventist church, they reproach him because he is not consistent with what he has understood, because he is still member of the Adventist church. They like Knight’s observation that many Adventists place Ellen White at the same level with the Holy Scriptures, and therefore

have a cultic attitude toward Ellen White. But if one has a cultic relationship towards Ellen White, he will have it both towards the apostle Paul and the Old Testament prophets. Whoever blindly interprets Ellen White, would also interpret Scripture blindly. George Knight gives his readers an excuse to reject Ellen White by citing the examples of fanatical interpretations of her texts, but if such logic is applied to the Bible, people will be given an excuse to reject the Bible also, after being confronted with fanatical examples of the interpretation of biblical texts through which many evils in history are done. Throughout the whole of history, the notions of truth, love and justice have been abused, and this doesn't mean that one should despise the aspiration to truth, love and justice. But, as we will see on the example of George Knight's biography, the reason for deviation into fanaticism is not the fact that people didn't have the light available to save them from delusion, but because they had a scornful attitude towards it.

The greatest protection against the distorted interpretation of the Holy Scripture is found in the Holy Scripture itself. George Knight excuses his decline in formalism and his temporary abandonment of the church by calling upon Ellen White and M.L. Andreasen. However, as we will document, the greatest protection against misinterpretation of Ellen White and M.L. Andreasen is in their own writings. That is why Knight continued to struggle against this light even when he returned to Adventism. He proclaimed the correct principles of truth for sources of formalism, so that he could discard them, and so, in front of his own conscience, to justify himself for not living according to them.

A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY IS IN FACT THE CAUSE OF THE IDENTITY CRISIS

The very name of Knight's book, "A Search for Identity", is the turning away from the essence of the message of the church and from the meaning of the church through history. The person who preaches the Gospel does not dwell upon who she is, but

rather upon the One about whom she preaches and upon the need of a person to whom Jesus needs to be revealed. A Christian does not ask the question “*Who am I?*” (Exodus 3:11), but “**Who are you, Lord?**” (Acts 9:5) “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” (2 Corinthians 4:5) The church that has Christ in the heart and represents the body of Christ on earth is not in a search for identity but in the search for the souls that it will win for Christ and therefore for eternity.

One would, under the term “search for identity”, think of the need to define belief (credo), which could be properly understood if it were a search for reasonable answers to those temptations that has a person to whom the church preaches its message.

But the very notion of “search for identity” is much more than the need for defining one’s own belief. The search for identity is most often an expression of the need for one’s own worthiness and specialty that a man often tries to acquire by identifying with the values of the community to which he belongs. This community can be national, sports, political, religious, etc. All the successes and values that the community attains, become the personal value of the one who feels he is a member of that community. If we feel that we are nobody and nothing, we will, through the identification with the values of the community, feel that we have become somebody and something. I’m not saying that it is a sin to have an identity, but the need for identity through the ideas of our uniqueness, worth and greatness is the need of an unburied vain Ego. Instead of satisfying our vain need for feeling of our own value and greatness, our motive should be to respond to the needs of other people. Therefore, we are not Adventists in order to meet the needs of our Ego, but to respond to God’s requirements and to the real needs of our neighbors. There is no room for dwelling upon ourselves in it. It separates one from God and alters the meaning of our message, so that it is no longer a response to the needs of those to whom we are preaching, but it is a response to the needs of one’s own Ego.

Since historian George Knight often imbues his lectures and texts with autobiographical reports in order to find the way to the hearts of people through them and receive understanding and approval for his own perceptions, we will also present here important moments from his life in order to understand deeper the motives of his fight for the relativization of Adventist belief and the fight against the authority of Ellen White.

When he was baptized as a young man, George Knight promised God that he “*would be the first perfect Christian since Jesus.*” (George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, 8) This I quote not only because of the later Knight’s obsession to prove that perfection is not achievable, but because of the intention to be the first since Jesus, which represents the same megalomania because of which he identifies himself with Martin Luther and writes 9.5 theses by which he accuses the General Conference with similar arguments with which Luther accused the Pope. The dispute arose because the General Conference did not agree to ordain women, so Knight identifies himself with Luther and President of GC, Ted Wilson, with the Pope.

But let’s return to the experience of young George Knight, who, after almost eight years of Adventism and several years of pastoral service, is disappointed in his perfection and leaves the church:

“Within three months of my baptism I had accepted last generation theology and had promised God that I would be the first sinlessly perfect person since Jesus. All I had to do was try hard enough. ... After eight years of striving I was still messed up. Beyond that, I hadn’t met even one sinlessly perfect Adventist. As a result, I decided to leave the ministry, give up on Adventism and what I perceived to be Christianity, and eventually return to the hedonism that had shaped my first nineteen years.” (George R. Knight, *End-Time Events and the Last Generation: the Explosive 1950s*)

As we see, Knight was trying to achieve perfection by reliance on himself, by the effort of his will, and therefore he had failed. In his book “End-time Events and the Last Generation: the Explosive 1950s”, George Knight shifts to Ellen White the responsibility of his failure by explaining that after eight years of effort to live by the perfection which she requires of the believer, he, confused and disappointed, left the church.

But how is it possible that in the light by which God illuminated the church through Ellen White, he did not find a reproach for his legalism and a solution for his problems? The central theme of many of her texts is the criticism of exactly his problem. How is it possible he did not notice it? How is it possible that he didn't have any friend who would point it out to him? How is it possible that the Holy Spirit did not direct him to the conviction of the problem and solution of the problem ?

If he did not want to read Ellen White, how, on the basis of the Scriptures and fundamental Adventist beliefs that speak about justification by faith, he could not understand it?

Didn't the dilemma of perfection, on the basis of which Jesus' disciples exclaimed, “Then who can be saved?” find an answer in Jesus' words: “**With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.**” (Matthew 19:26)

Hasn't young pastor, George Knight, read the Scripture?

If Holy Scripture itself was not clear to him, isn't it an indication of exactly how the writings of Ellen White were necessary for him?

Knight had just prevented his sins from manifesting and because of that, he naturally was inclined to believe that all other people are the hypocrites, so he had a need to doubt them and to project to them his unconquered sins, which Ellen White clearly discloses as the temptation of biblical Pharisees:

“For, seeing that they fail to keep the law, they will devise rules and regulations of their own to force themselves to obey. All this turns the mind away from God to self. His love dies out of the heart, and with it perishes love for his fellow men. A

system of human invention, with its multitudinous exactions, will lead its advocates to judge all who come short of the prescribed human standard. The atmosphere of selfish and narrow criticism stifles the noble and generous emotions, and causes men to become self-centered judges and petty spies. The Pharisees were of this class. ... Their own attainments became the standard by which they judged others. Putting on the robes of self-dignity, they mounted the judgment seat to criticize and condemn.” (EGW, MB 123)

Ellen White rebukes reliance on oneself instead on God in an attempt to keep the law:

“They do not look to God, to be kept by His power, but depend upon watchfulness against temptation and the performance of certain duties for acceptance with Him. There are no victories in this kind of faith. Such persons toil to no purpose; their souls are in continual bondage, and they find no rest until their burdens are laid at the feet of Jesus.” (EGW, CCh 49.2)

Reliance upon ourselves naturally leads to discouragement:

“There is everything in Him to inspire with hope, with faith, and with courage. He is our righteousness, our consolation and rejoicing. Those who look within for comfort will become weary and disappointed. A sense of our weakness and unworthiness should lead us with humility of heart to plead the atoning sacrifice of Christ. As we rely upon His merits we shall find rest and peace and joy. He saves to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.” (EGW, 5T 199-200)

So, George Knight's accusations that Ellen White led him to struggle in his own force for his perfection are just an excuse, because she clearly exposes his own temptation. George Knight, besides Ellen White, calls also on the Adventist theologian M.L. Andreasen, claiming that he overburdened him with the last generation theology, in which allegedly a man must, by his own power, without God, achieve perfection of character. George Knight writes about this the following:

“In actuality, according to his theology, humans must get to the place where they don’t need Christ, where they can stand without a mediator on the basis of their own achievements. M. L. Andreasen came to that interpretation when he read Ellen White’s statements about standing without a mediator in the sense of standing without a savior.” (George R. Knight, End-time events and the last generation: the explosive 1950s)

But these claims on M.L. Andreasen are a lie, because Andreasen, like Ellen White, advocates the following:

“But though Christ has finished His intercession, the saints are still the object of God’s love and care. Holy angels watch over them. God provides them shelter from their enemies; He provides them with food, shields them from destruction, and supplies grace and power for holy living. (See Psalms 91) Yet they are still in the world, still tempted, afflicted, tormented. Will they stand the test? To human eyes it seems impossible. If only God would come to their rescue, all would be well. They are determined to resist the evil one. If need be they will die, but they will not sin. Satan has no power—and never has had—to make any man sin. He can tempt, he can seduce, he can threaten; but he cannot compel. And now God demonstrates through the weakest of the weak that there is no excuse, and never has been any, for sinning. If men in the last generation can successfully repel Satan’s attack; if they can do this with all the odds against them and the sanctuary closed, what excuse is there for men’s ever sinning?” (Milian Lauritz Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, Volume 74, 318)

After such encouraging words about the victory over sin by reliance on God, let’s go back to the devastating experience of a young George Knight, who leaves the lofty ideals of perfection and then Adventism itself:

*“All I wanted was out — out of both Adventism and Christianity. My only desire was to return to the happy hedonism of my earlier years.” (George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, 8)*

He claims that he didn't meet any perfect Adventist, which means that through his mind, limited by his own experience, he tried unsuccessfully to see in others what he did not have in his own experience. Since being formalist himself, in the experience of others he could not see anything more than his own formalism, and this approach will become the basis of Knight's criticizing in all his works.

The ideal of perfection demanded from young Knight to defeat hedonism, similar to when Jesus directed a rich young man to the ideal of perfection:

“Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”” (Matthew 19:21)

Unfortunately, young Knight rejected this instruction just as the young man from Jesus' example:

“When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” (Matthew 19:22)

The fact is that Knight did not experience the conversion of the heart and conquer hedonism, so, therefore, the ideal of perfection naturally burdened his conscience and made him stand up for the fight against this ideal. We do not know if a rich young man stopped praying, but George Knight writes of himself:

“For the next six years I did not read my Bible, for six years I did not pray, for six years I wandered spiritually in a “far country” (Luke 15:13).” (George Knight, The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism, 9)

Knight then devoted his life to the attempt to find, by studying philosophy, the meaning of life which he didn't find in Christianity, which ended in failure. And then some crucial events took place that led him, after six years, to return to Adventism.

We would think that George Knight finally understood the secret of perfection, that same truth that can be seen from the continuation of the discussion between Christ and the disciples, after the departure of a rich young man:

“And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”” (Matthew 19:23-26)

The lesson of Jesus’ words is that perfection is impossible to those who seek strength in their human power, but it is possible for those who trust in God. Being perfect does not mean being sinless, but it means fully responding to God’s commission at this moment. There is no deep philosophy. Whoever doesn’t overcome the temptation, the temptation will overcome him.

However, that George Knight does not believe in the power of a true victory over sin, reveals his interpretation of the apostle Paul’s words:

“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.” (Romans 7:18-19)

By these words the apostle Paul speaks of the futility of seeking goodness in himself. But George Knight interprets these words as man’s limitation by his own sinful nature, which hinders him to live righteously, as if a man can not give up his self-reliance. In his work “Exploring Romans: A Devotional Commentary”, in commentary of 7. chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, Knight outlines his distorted interpretation of the words of the apostle Paul:

“His conclusion is certain. Paul has nailed it down from both directions. He does evil and fails to do good for the same reason--the sin that dwells within him. ... And on what basis does it remain? Here we come to Paul’s second key word as he deals with the problem of sin in believers. In Romans 7:14 he points out that it is the flesh (sarx) that is connected to sin

*slavery. "Flesh" in Paul's writings does not refer to bodily tissues, but to a person's lower nature. ... Paul is not saying that Christians never do right or that they do evil habitually, but rather that they aren't as free from error as they would like to be. By using the slavery metaphor, he expresses the thought that he still finds sin to be a powerful force and that he hasn't managed to resist it every moment. ... To the contrary, using military imagery he views the Christian life as being locked in deadly combat with the forces of evil. But his realism goes beyond the realm of mere warfare. He recognizes that in spite of his best intentions he is a "prisoner of the law of sin" which especially focuses on his "bodily parts." (George R. Knight, *Exploring Romans: A Devotional Commentary*, 160-163)*

We see that Knight distortedly interprets verses by which the apostle Paul wants to discourage anyone who would try to find the strength of the right living in himself, instead of in God. Such verses about the weakness of human nature have the purpose of preserving us from reliance on ourselves. It doesn't matter at all that we are in the body prone to sin, if we do not rely upon our body, but we rely on God.

Although we maintain the awareness of sinfulness, we do not sin as long as the awareness of sinfulness keeps us "glued" to Jesus. Although by nature we are sinful, sin has no power over us as long as we don't rely on ourselves, but we rely only on Jesus. The apostle Paul explains this truth by his own words:

"For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:10)

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16)

"In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set

on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness." (Romans 8:4-10)

Unfortunately, George Knight never understood the meaning of these words. Thus he nowhere describes how he defeated his temptation of hedonism. Naturally, it would be pretentious for Knight to talk about himself as the person who finally achieved perfection, because person who is perfect is not aware of his perfection. Ellen White explains:

"We are justified by faith. A soul who understands the meaning of these words will never be satisfied with himself." (EGW, 6BC 1073)

"As you look above you, you will continually have the feeling of weakness in the human being." (EGW, DA 493)

But it would have been expected that Knight pointed us to Jesus as his Savior from sin.

However, George Knight did not return to Jesus, but to Adventism.

He was not drawn to Jesus by His exalted character, but was attracted to the charms of an Adventist identity:

"About that time my major professor, an agnostic existentialist of Jewish heritage, told me one day that if he wasn't a Jew he'd be a nobody. That statement from a man who routinely smashed religion in class caught me off guard. "What do you mean?" I asked. Josh's answer was as pointed as it was memorable. I still recall his passion as he proclaimed that it was his Jewishness that gave him meaning -- that he wasn't just one of those millions of people out there, but a member of the community. The community, in fact, not only provided orientation for his life, but it sent him all over the world as a spea-

ker. As he talked I reeled in astonishment, thinking to myself that Josh wasn't a Jew but an Adventist. ... His religious orientation was his life, even though he wasn't a "believer." It was his history, his culture, his social location, and he loved and respected it for all of those reasons. Reflecting on my conversation with Josh many years later, I realized that if I had been born Adventist and if my father had been a pastor, my mother a church school teacher, and my grandfather a conference president, the most difficult and radical thing I could do would be to leave the church that had provided social meaning to my life. It would be easier to stay in rather than depart, even if I didn't believe. In fact, in such a circumstance becoming a pastor, administrator, or Bible teacher would be preferable to cutting off my cultural roots and family. After all, you don't have to believe that stuff. There is a certain level of comfort and security in "playing church."" (George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, 9-10)

Therefore, the need of unrenewed human nature for identity is the main reason why George Knight became an Adventist. Ellen White talks about people who "When they see that there is no way of weaving self into the work, they reject the salvation provided." (EGW, DA 280.1). Apparently, Knight found a way to weave himself into his own salvation and his understanding of Adventism. First, it was the desire for elite perfection, and then the need for identity inspired by Josh's travels around the world and holding lectures.

To be perfect in the sense of being "first since Jesus" is not that healthy concept of perfection that should distinguish every Christian in the victory over the everyday temptations of life. Neither the perfection of 144 000 isn't based on the idea of being "first since Jesus", but such perfection will be a necessity of survival. Temptations will be so strong then, that victory over them will be the only way to avoid decline and collapse. "The first since Jesus" will not then be the motive of the struggle, but its spontaneous result. But since Knight was driven by elitist motivation

for perfection, and since he was experiencing failure in practical achieving of that perfection, we can understand his need now to deny this concept of perfection.

“If you can’t be perfect, give up the righteous life!” is a whisper of Satan to many people who are young in the faith, especially at the turning point of life. Proud persons have an additional problem of stress in meeting with Christ’s righteousness, because they can not endure the constant feeling of their own weakness and dependence on God’s grace. This need leads them, if they can not achieve the experience of their own perfection, to devalue all requirements for perfection, and to satisfy the notion of their worthiness in the experience of their identity and their comparison with those “below” them.

How did Knight eliminate the burdensome appeal to perfection so that he could now feel like an Adventist, and that his conscience was no longer disturbed and pride humiliated because he was not perfect?

Knight describes the return to church after a meeting with the pastor, for whom he doesn’t say that he revealed to him any truth that helped him to go by the way of perfection, but reveals what is the ideal of a man who seek salvation in identity - a church that does not “rub his nose” in its doctrine.

George Knight, who for years grumbled that he could not find the perfect Adventist, finally finds a pastor through whose personality he considers to have met Christ himself.

Is it a pastor who discovered the perfection of character?

No, but it is the pastor who didn’t rebuke Knight for his imperfection:

“But he didn’t preach a sermon to me, counsel me, or condemn me. He merely exuded an atmosphere of calm assurance in his faith and treated me with kindness and love. That day I met Jesus in the person of Robert W. Olson. When he left, I told my wife that he had what I needed. That day, 14 years after I had become an Adventist, I became a Christian. To put it another way, my Adventism got baptized. At that point

*I became spiritually active in Adventism again. It wasn't because Adventism's theology was perfect that I reconnected, but because its theology was closer to the Bible than that of any other church that I was aware of. In short, I was and am an Adventist by conviction rather than by choice." (George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, 11)*

But Jesus continues to send to each of us a call for perfection, to renounce our false gods and to be perfect. As the teaching of the Adventist Church morally and spiritually obliges, George Knight is forced to decide - whether he will go to war against himself, or against the light that calls him on perfection:

"The light of Christ sweeps away the darkness that covers their sins, and the need of reform is made manifest. While those who yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit begin war with themselves, those who cling to sin war against the truth and its representatives." (EGW, DA 306)

In accordance with the foregoing words, a question is imposed: does Knight go to war with himself, which would then manifest to others that Jesus is the winner in his life who finally helped him to accomplish his ideals of perfection which previously he could not achieve when he relied on himself? Or, does Knight start a lifelong struggle against the doctrine of the Church that stifles him, especially against Ellen White, seeking to make the road of salvation wide enough to have place also for him with his imperfection?

Unfortunately, Knight starts to struggle against the idea of perfection, projecting to the advocates of perfection the idea of elitism by which he himself had been previously driven. Let's look at what kind of cynicism he uses to express the concept of perfection:

"I don't know if you've ever seen anybody who is perfect. Sometimes I close my eyes and visualize some of the perfect people I have known. Here comes one now across the screen of my imagination. She is very satisfied because she has gotten

the victory over cheese. Here comes another one. This one is a first-century Pharisee. This guy is really "religious." He knows exactly what size rock he can carry on the Sabbath day and how far he can carry it without carrying a burden and thus committing sin." (George R. Knight, *I Used to Be Perfect*)

In this way, Knight compromises the idea of perfection and fights against the Spirit of prophecy whose demands in themselves are the demands of perfection.

Instead of Adventist Church to be and to remain "the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15), which by its teachings exposes temptations and delusions of this century, it seems that the church, according to Knight, should blunt the sword of truth by diminishing the significance of Ellen White, so that it becomes broad for every delusion of the fallen Babylon, because then there will be space for many unconverted believers whose identity would not be endangered by this.

But the one who relies on people instead of on God, will naturally be disappointed in people. The search for identity is in itself a source of identity crisis. Like any other desire that springs from the flesh, so is the need for identity insatiable. It naturally leads to disappointment in the same way as the epoch of Romanticism (epoch of abuse of feelings for the sake of satisfaction) produced the epoch of Realism (criticism of the circumstances as a source of one's own unhappiness). When a man puts another man or church community on that place that belongs only to God, in one moment he suddenly becomes disappointed in another man or community because they are not able to satisfy him. Instead of examining himself and repenting for his sins, a man comes into the state of dwelling upon the sins of others and for his misfortune to accuse other people.

We can wonder how Knight's books leave many of his readers delighted, when in them he does not praise God anywhere, nor reveals His mighty hand, nor His exalted character! But unfortunately, an obvious source of their delight is a spirit of a "church

realism”, i.e. the spirit of pointing finger at other men, imbued with disrespect, mocking and cynical blaming of other people.

Fallen human nature is pleased to be compared with other sinners because it then feels more righteous, and not with Jesus, because comparison to Jesus endangers self- complacency and self-righteousness. From such spirit there is no use, but obscured mind sees the benefit in psychological satisfaction provided by false moralizing.

True spiritual literature convicts a reader of his own sinfulness and encourages him with the revelation of God’s mercy which is seen in every historical event, while George Knight’s books are imbued with blindness before God’s guidance and with poisoned spirit of ingratitude and murmuring, as we can notice in his relation to his brethren in the church, above whom he rises when he speaks to them the following words, as if he is not one of them:

*“My meandering journey might help readers understand why I used to be able to preach a sermon entitled “Why I Don’t Like Adventists.” ... Not long ago I saw a bumper sticker that spoke to the point. “JESUS SAVE ME” read the large print. “From your people” declared the small. I thought the entire blurb might make a meaningful book title. And then there was the atheistic philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who proclaimed the profound truth of my early years: “The best argument against Christianity is Christians.” In all too many cases the same dictum would hold for the best argument against Adventism.” (George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, 11)*

The spirit of disrespect is evident when George Knight in his book “The Fat Lady and the Empire” calls Adventist Church a fat woman who can not enter the door of the Kingdom because her hands are full of packages because she returns from a shopping spree. Jesus does not call his church by the notion of a fat woman but by the notion of a bride. In Knight’s works, we find terms such as “Neutered Lamb” and “Neutered Lion”, which in essence

constitute a violation of the Third Commandment of God. This spirit motivates the reader mockingly to deal with the sins of others, and not to examine himself with a reverence before God.

Interpreting the state of the church through his own motives and through his need for identity, George Knight concludes that the Adventist Church is in a crisis of identity. Where did he get from the idea about the crisis of a church identity, if not by the projection of his own crisis of identity? Disappointment in the church is always the accompanying feature of those who seek salvation in the community, instead of in God.

A true Christian does not start from his own self: does he like or dislike the people he spends time with. Anyone who comes into the sphere of his influence, comes into the sphere of God's blessing, because he thinks of what he can do for another, and doesn't think about whether he has any benefit from another man.

Historian George Knight does not understand this. Interpreting the actions of other people through his own complexes and loadedness with the identity, he concludes that other believers are moved by that same need, while the motive of love, as the driving force and the work of the Holy Spirit, he does not understand. Judgment of a human reason, limited by relying on unrenewed nature, is well described in the biblical verses:

“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14)

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.” (Romans 8:5-7)

For example, when he speaks of the first Adventists who kept the Sabbath, George Knight thinks that they explored the Bible

not to discover the God's will, which they would fulfill from their love for Him, but he projects to them his personal complexes bound for his own identity:

"They were united in the search for identity but on little else in that early period. Their task was to explore their Bibles anew in the context of the chaotic conditions of post-1844 Millerism to discover where they stood in prophetic history (see MF 295-325). As a result, their foremost task during the extended period of transition from Millerism to Sabbatarianism was to determine what was Adventist in Adventism." (George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Beliefs*, 58)

Of course, a person inspired by love is not interested in her own identity or place in prophetic history, or what is Adventist in Adventism, but is only interested in how correctly to serve God and her neighbor, and to watch over her belief that it is God's, not human. Let's look at how much narcissism and megalomania is in the following Knight's interpretation of the pioneers of the Advent movement:

"In conclusion, I need to reiterate that the founders of Adventism found the significance of their movement in the prophetic package of Revelation 14 with its progressive flow from the first angel's message to the second angel's message to the third angel's ... They saw themselves as a called-out people with a special end-time message to present to all the world. It was that prophetic understanding that empowered Seventh-day Adventism and made it a dynamic force." (George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, 47)

According to Knight, it isn't seen that God initiated and gave strength to Advent movement, but their strength was in the fact that they recognized themselves in the Scriptures, that they saw themselves as "a called-out people with a special end-time message," and that they had a deep conviction.

The following text shows that Knight thinks that Adventists were ready for great sacrifices for their mission, not because they

had a great love for Christ who, they believed, would soon appear in the clouds, but because they had a deep conviction:

*“On a broader scale, why should any of us risk our life for a cause? Why live for it? Why did those early Adventists sacrifice their means and their children to mission? Only because of a deep conviction that they had a message right out of the heart of the book of Revelation that all the world needed to hear before Jesus returns in the clouds of heaven.” (George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, 15)*

Instead of the work of the Holy Spirit who changes human hearts and thus gives people a valid motivation, George Knight sees a solution in the excitement of a human nature by appropriate intellectual motivation:

*“Such dedication is not a causal enterprise. It takes conviction to motivate sacrificial action -- a conviction that Adventism has a message that is not only true and important, but one the world needs to hear in preparation for the Second Advent. ... Have we nothing to inspire young adults? Have we nothing that not only leads them to remain in Adventism but to dedicate their lives to “the cause”? What does it take to inspire them? Not the fact that we are like everybody else, but that Adventism stands for something important, that Seventh-day Adventism makes a difference. Young people are idealistic by nature, even in the face of adults who have been jaded by time and trials. Young people are energized by visions that give life meaning. It was so among the founders of Adventism. It was so in my life when grasping the apocalyptic vision transformed my listlessness and hedonistic purposelessness into meaning and mission. And I find that it is still so among young people in our day.” (George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, 54-55)*

Unfortunately, the same psychological motivation based on driving motives of fallen human nature, Knight attributes even to the Lord Jesus Christ:

*“But making problematic statements was not Jesus’ only difficulty. He was also affected with what we might call “sanctified arrogance.” He so believed in Himself and His politically incorrect message that He told 12 relatively unlearned men to spread it to the entire world. ... You don’t give your life and your worldly goods without knowing that you have the truth. If Jesus had been politically correct and had lacked sanctified arrogance, Christianity would have existed for a few years as a backwater Jewish sect and then blended back into the Near Eastern woodwork.” (George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, 14)*

Because of the above-mentioned superficiality in understanding of the difference between the divine and the human, suffers Knight’s very analysis of the Advent history, in which Knight “strains out a gnat but swallows a camel”.

Instead of seeing in the liberalization of faith the causes of the penetration of secularism, and also the errors of Spiritual Formation, and instead of warning church against the Omega of apostasy, he is engaged in theological discussions that have nothing to do with practical temptations of Adventist believers. In one moment he himself admits this temptation:

*“Because of my unsophisticated nature I find a great deal of theological discussion to be entertaining but not necessarily meaningful.” (George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, 52)*

Since he sees the problem in the wrong conviction, and not in the absence of the personal communion of a man with God, he also offers his solution in balanced understandings about the significance of the truth about the judgment, the beast, and the fallen Babylon:

*“We have a pretty smart devil. He has driven Adventists and their preachers off a balanced view of apocalyptic in almost every direction.” (George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, 55)*

The real balance is the fruit of encounter with God and dying to self, and not of the balance of views in which we try to be neither too liberal nor too fanatical. A man can even without God achieve a balance by trying to be 50% liberal and 50% fanatic, but this cannot make him right before God who looks on the heart, below our “balanced” views.

WHO LED THE ADVENT PEOPLE IN FORMATION OF THE DOCTRINE?

“The history of ancient Israel is a striking illustration of the past experience of the Adventist body. God led His people in the advent movement, even as He led the children of Israel from Egypt. In the great disappointment their faith was tested as was that of the Hebrews at the Red Sea.” (EGW, GC 457.2)

In the interpretation of Adventist history of the historian George Knight, there is no God as the One who leads His people, and who gives them exactly that light of truth that is the answer to their real temptations. Knight portrays the history of the formation of church doctrine as the fruit of influence of various traditions that the pioneers personally brought with themselves in Adventism. Who had already kept the Sabbath, he brought in the Sabbath. Puritanism has brought strictness in Adventism. The coming out of Babylon is not the fruit of God’s call through the second angel of Revelation 18,4 but Knight emphasizes the theological explanation of one man: “*It is difficult to overestimate the impact on the Adventist movement of Fitch’s call to leave Babylon.*” (George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Beliefs*, 58) Then, Knight claims, “*Ellen White brought the Wesleyan/Methodist emphases on sanctification and perfection into Adventism.*” (George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Beliefs*, 33)

So, when Ellen White in her works emphasizes sanctification and perfection, it is not God who through her revealed it as an important truth for the remnant church, but she brought it in Ad-

ventism as a part of her own Methodist tradition. If her tradition were different it would follow, according to Knight, that in her works she would not emphasize sanctification and perfection.

If there is a need to specifically explain that some influences came into Adventism from the side, coincidentally, and not as God's answer to the need, it is the appearance of antitrinitarian views that came into Adventism from a community that called itself the "Christian Connection" movement. The "Christian Connection" community emerged as a reaction to Catholic and Anglican influence in America. Everything that in Protestantism resembled Catholicism they rejected, from the notion of Trinity, through the definition of creed, belief in the immortality of the soul, to the global church administration. Their role was certainly positive, because they were the main bearers of resistance to the following decadence and compromise with the fallen Christianity. In their official journal, "Christian Palladium" from 1836, we read:

"We hear much of the Catholic religion in the West, and of its threatening progress. ... The creation of dark times, it cannot stand before the light. In this country in particular, it finds no coadjutors in any circumstances, passions, or institutions. Catholicism is immoveable, and movement and innovation are the order of the day. It rejects the idea of melioration, and the passion for improvement is inflaming all minds. It takes its stand in the Past, and this generation are living in the Future. It clings to forms, which the mind has outgrown. It will not modify doctrine, in which the intelligence of the age cannot but recognize the stamp of former ignorance. It forbids free enquiry, and enquiry is the spirit of the age, the boldest enquiry, stopping no where, invading every region of thought." (The Christian Palladium, Vol. 5, 1836)

In response to their free search, many members of the "Christian Connection" recognized God's response in the three angels' messages. Their entire local communities became Adventist when they heard the three angels' messages, and thus many of their ministers were also found among the leading pioneers of

the Advent movement. Husband of Ellen White, James White, was an ordained minister of “Christian Connection”.

Thus, antitrinitarianism did not appear in Adventism as the fruit of individual Adventist study of the Scriptures, but many leading pioneers of Adventism “automatically” had transferred it from the “Christian Connection” to Adventism, although none of them made of it a testing truth or considered that this question is important for salvation.

A critical attitude towards the creed also came into the Adventism from the “Christian Connection”. Critique of the creed was good in early Adventism, because it prepared the path to the light that God gave to Adventists through Ellen White, but when that light very clearly defined Adventist belief, the creed became very necessary to preserve the church from the heretic misconceptions of the end time and enabled the Adventist Church to really become a pillar and buttress of truth.

According to George Knight, the truth about Sabbath Ellen White did not accept on the basis of God’s revelation, but by reading Bates’s publication about the Sabbath:

“Later that year Ellen and her new spouse (James White) both accepted the validity of the seventh-day Sabbath, probably after studying the evidence in Bates’s The Seventh Day Sabbath, a Perpetual Sign, which he had published in August (IT 75).”
(George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Beliefs*, 68)

However, Ellen White claims the opposite, that although she first heard the truth of the Sabbath from Bates and certainly understood that Saturday is biblical day of rest, it still was not the reason to declare this truth to be important and to keep the Sabbath, but it was the vision that God gave her that was decisive:

“Elder B. was keeping the Sabbath, and urged its importance. I did not feel its importance, and thought that Elder B. erred in dwelling upon the fourth commandment more than upon the other nine. But the Lord gave me a view of the heavenly sanctuary. The temple of God was opened in heaven, and I

was shown the ark of God covered with the mercy seat. ... Jesus raised the cover of the ark, and I beheld the tables of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written. ... I was shown that if the true Sabbath had always been kept, there would never have been an infidel or an atheist. The observance of the Sabbath would have preserved the world from idolatry.” (EGW, 1T 75-76)

As we see, by dishonest imputing, George Knight attempts to present an Adventist history deprived of God's guidance and of significance of light that God has given us through Ellen White.

Even those universal Protestant truths of that time, as it was the emphasis on reason, he is trying to devalue and to elevate the significance of feelings, which is a feature of modern apostate Protestantism as well as of the movement of the Spiritual Formation in Adventism itself. George Knight claims that the emphasis on reason entered Adventism through William Miller, because he, previously to his conversion, was a Deist:

“Deism utilized human reason rather than the Bible for its ultimate authority. It is important in understanding the Adventist theological heritage because William Miller was a Deist. He and his generation lived in a world highly appreciative of rational approaches to everything, including religion. ... Following that lead, Miller’s evangelistic method definitely aimed at his hearers’ heads rather than at their hearts or emotions.” (George R. Knight, A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Beliefs, 34)

Until the rejection of the three angels’ messages, Protestants emphasized the significance of reason as well as Ellen White, while in evoking of feelings they were recognizing manipulative methods of Catholicism. Even the Baroque style in art was called by many Protestants by the term “Jesuit Style”. Reason is not raised above the Bible, but it is considered the only means of understanding the Bible.

But aiming at “hearers’ heads rather than at their hearts or emotions” historian George Knight tries, as well as the modern

apostate Protestants, to explain as the influence of Deism, and thus to devalue reliance only on reason, which represents a distortion of historical facts.

Historical sources reveal to us that the Protestants, until the rejection of the three angels' messages, had a contemptuous attitude toward Romanticism and religious mysticism. The one who has truly newborn heart doesn't have a need to additionally move himself by arousing feelings. This is the reason why Protestants weren't interested in decorating and were satisfied with the simplicity of Classicism in art, and also disinterested in inebriating with romance novels:

“Philosophers and statesmen are heard to deplore that morals are not sufficiently strict, and the literary productions of the country constantly lead one to suppose so. In America all books, novels not excepted, suppose women to be chaste, and no one thinks of relating affairs of gallantry. ... The Inquisition has never been able to prevent a vast number of anti-religious books from circulating in Spain. The empire of the majority succeeds much better in the United States, since it actually removes the wish of publishing them. ... Attempts have been made by some governments to protect the morality of nations by prohibiting licentious books. In the United States no one is punished for this sort of works, but no one is tempted to write them. It is not, however, that all citizens have pure morals, but the majority is regular in them.” (Alexis De Tocquille, *Democracy in America*, 1835)

The relationship of Protestants toward God, another man, marriage, art, was based on a common sense. Non-Protestants considered it to be cold, but at the same time they were left amazed with Protestants' willingness to help the most “unworthy” human beings, with chastity and purity of their marriages, disinterest in rituals and ceremonies in a religious service, and stability of spirit in the most severe crises of life. Reason kept American Protestant girls from temptations that today are the foundation of the collapse of marriage and family:

“Amongst almost all Protestant nations young women are far more the mistresses of their own actions than they are in Catholic countries. ... I have been frequently surprised, and almost frightened, at the singular address and happy boldness with which young women in America contrive to manage their thoughts and their language amidst all the difficulties of stimulating conversation; a philosopher would have stumbled at every step along the narrow path which they trod without accidents and without effort. It is easy indeed to perceive that, even amidst the independence of early youth, an American woman is always mistress of herself; she indulges in all permitted pleasures, without yielding herself up to any of them; and her reason never allows the reins of self-guidance to drop, though it often seems to hold them loosely. ... When the time for choosing a husband is arrived, that cold and stern reasoning power which has been educated and invigorated by the free observation of the world, teaches an American woman that a spirit of levity and independence in the bonds of marriage is a constant subject of annoyance, not of pleasure; it tells her that the amusements of the girl cannot become the recreations of the wife, and that the sources of a married woman's happiness are in the home of her husband. ... No girl then believes that she cannot become the wife of the man who loves her; and this renders all breaches of morality before marriage very uncommon: for, whatever be the credulity of the passions, a woman will hardly be able to persuade herself that she is beloved, when her lover is perfectly free to marry her and does not.” (Alexis De Tocquille, *Democracy in America*, 1835)

An emphasis on reason and a disdainful attitude toward manipulation of feelings in everyday life and in the worship itself, were a feature of the majority of the Protestant world and not only Deists.

In his lecture on the topic of his book, George Knight reveals a critical attitude towards relying solely on reason, as if reason

in preaching is not sufficient to result in the conversion of human hearts:

“I would suggest that Deism is still very much present in Adventist circles ... In our approach to evangelism ... But the Bible has so much more than understanding, because the Bible implies the whole personality, the heart as well as the reason. But very often we, Adventists, are only aiming at the reason.”
(George R. Knight, *History of Adventist Theology*, <http://www.svetlostistine.org>)

Here can be seen that George Knight doesn't understand that reasonable understanding is enough for choosing God. When a man with his reason meet God (through His character), then he, with his will, can choose God, which naturally results in a newborn heart. There is no need for a man to further evoke his feelings, if he really gave his heart to God. True love is not being provoked in the heart because it is not a part of human nature, but it is accepted by faith from God. Tendency towards the evoking of human nature and exciting of emotions is the characteristic of namely those persons who are not moved by real love and whom, due to the hardness of heart, reasonable charge leaves indifferent. Instead of reforming the sinful motives of the heart, they reform their feelings and thus deceive themselves that they are converted. Ellen White describes this experience as a characteristic of false revivals of apostate Protestantism:

“Popular revivals are too often carried by appeals to the imagination, by exciting the emotions, by gratifying the love for what is new and startling. Converts thus gained have little desire to listen to Bible truth, little interest in the testimony of prophets and apostles. Unless a religious service has something of a sensational character, it has no attractions for them. A message which appeals to unimpassioned reason awakens no response. The plain warnings of God's word, relating directly to their eternal interests, are unheeded. ... In those churches which he (Satan) can bring under his deceptive power he will make it appear that God's special blessing is poured out;

there will be manifest what is thought to be great religious interest. Multitudes will exult that God is working marvelously for them, when the work is that of another spirit. Under a religious guise, Satan will seek to extend his influence over the Christian world. ... There is an emotional excitement, a mingling of the true with the false, that is well adapted to mislead.” (EGW, GC 463-464)

We can conclude that these prophetic words of Ellen White about false revivals have been fulfilled. Romanticist spirit in the meantime, through the twentieth century, imbued the whole Protestantism:

“Despite the negative forces, Protestantism demonstrated a striking vitality by 1900. Shrugging off Enlightenment rationalism, Protestants embraced romanticism, with the stress on the personal and the invisible. ... The rationalism of the late 19th century faded away, and there was a new emphasis on the psychology and feeling of the individual...” (Kenneth Scott Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age, II: The Nineteenth Century in Europe: The Protestant and Eastern Churches* (1959) pp. 428-31)

This wrong expectance to feel and to experience God is not only the foundation of a deceit of apostate Protestantism, but can be the source of discouragement for the sincere ones:

“Many precious souls, earnestly desiring to be Christians, are yet stumbling in darkness, waiting for their feelings to be powerfully exercised. They look for a special change to take place in their feelings. They expect some irresistible force, over which they have no control, to overpower them. They overlook the fact that the believer in Christ is to work out his salvation with fear and trembling.” (EGW, Ms55-1910)

It is clear to us that George Knight is in conflict with certain understandings of Ellen White and with teachings of the church doctrine itself, which he tries to devalue as if they were the fruit of human reasoning, and not God's guidance. This we also see when he wants to present that Ellen White was allegedly under

the influence of James White and Elder Joseph Bates in the formulation of specific Adventist doctrines, but not under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Only allegedly later, after 1890, after the death of James White and Elder Bates, she conducted theological reformulation of doctrines, for what George Knight claims that she changed the church doctrine from antitrinitarianism in favor of the Trinity (see *Desire of Ages*, chapter no. 74). In this way, Knight calls in question God's leadership in the history of Adventism in global:

“It was Ellen White whose writings led the way in the theological shift. Unlike her experience in the post-1844 period, during which she followed the lead of her husband and Bates in the formulation of the distinctive Adventist doctrines, in the 1890’s she was at the forefront of the action, related to theological reformulation, through her major writings on Christ and His teachings. . . . it should be obvious to our readers that Adventism has experienced major theological change across the course of its history and that Ellen White had a role in that change.” (G. Knight, Ministry, Oct, 1993. p.10,11. Art. Adventists and Change)

The delusion which imbues Knight's understanding of the church history is that the church, allegedly, has been changing its belief and not that through the time only deepened it. Such understanding he takes as an excuse for future changes, by which he opens the door to the legalization of heresies through the church institution, which Ellen White predicted under the name of Omega of apostasy.

In George Knight's work we meet with the marginalization of the role of the Spirit of prophecy through Ellen White in the creation of the doctrine of the Adventist Church, by claiming that the visions of Ellen White allegedly didn't have the significant importance in early Adventism, because Ellen White had no authority:

“While Ellen Harmon’s vision harmonized with the Bible based conclusions of Crosier and others, we must remember that

*she had no authority in Adventism at that time. She was basically unknown to the major players in the developing sanctuary theology. To them she was merely a 17-year-old girl claiming to have visions amidst the conflicting voices of a shut door Adventism literally overrun by a multitude of individuals claiming charismatic gifts.” (George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Beliefs*, 65)*

George Knight does not understand that messages of this kind are not accepted on the basis of trust in the previously established authority which represents them, but on the basis of the meaning of the message itself. The meaning of the message is recognizable as inspired of God by the very reason that it is a response to the need, and under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. If a message is, according to its meaning, an obvious answer to the need, people would accept it even if donkey and stones had spoken it.

Namely, in a time when there was a deep discouragement because Jesus did not come on the predicted date, there was a need for explanation that Jesus did not deceive His waiting people, but that on that date really happened an important event in the heavenly Sanctuary, which His waiting people wrongly attributed to His Second Coming. The truth about this is clear in itself, and recognizable as a reasonable response to the need, so Ellen White really did not need any other authority, but the vision itself, to respond to the need of disappointed believers. But the fact that it was necessary that Ellen White receive a vision is not contradictory to the truth that Adventist belief in heavenly Sanctuary is founded on the Holy Scriptures. Ellen White, due to God's revelations through visions, only explained this biblical truth more clearly. She was a lesser light who led to the greater; lesser light, without whom greater light could hardly have been recognized as true, comprehensible and clear. But notice that George Knight interprets the concept of a lesser light as a lessening of the light that comes to us through the Bible:

“The purpose of the Testimonies is not to provide new light on perfection and other topics, but to simplify “the great truths, already given” in the Bible. According to Ellen White, God gave to the Adventist Church “a lesser light [her writings] to lead men and women to the greater light [the Bible]. One of the most serious problems in Adventism is that it has too often used the lesser light to lead people away from the Bible rather than toward it.” (George R. Knight, The Pharisee’s Guide To Perfect Holiness)

According to the foregoing words, George Knight speaks the following about the importance of Ellen White:

“Before moving away from this section on the gift of prophecy, we should note that Ellen White’s gift did not play a prominent role in the development of Adventist doctrine. ... The same could be said for each of the great doctrinal positions of Adventism.” (George R. Knight, A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists, 37)

In order to devalue the role of Ellen White, George Knight claims that the visions of Ellen White did not have the role of initiation, but only confirmation, as if they were the only two possible purposes of visions:

“In relation to that process, Ellen White’s visions filled the role of confirmation rather than initiation (see e.g., WLF 18-20, 12).” (George R. Knight, A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Beliefs, 86)

This Knight’s statement is a very dishonest way to undermine the importance of the visions of Ellen White, because in the Advent movement different individuals believed everything, and visions of Ellen White could always be a confirmation of the beliefs of those individuals which in that moment were becoming a light for that time.

When Ellen White received a vision of the importance of division of food into clean and unclean, it really confirmed the correctness of such understanding of those individuals who had already had that light, but her visions in those cases meant that

the time had come for these truths to be proclaimed to the church and to the world, because they became important as a response to the need of that moment:

“The third angel is leading out and purifying a people, and they should move with him unitedly. ... I saw that the angels of God would lead His people no faster than they could receive and act upon the important truths that are communicated to them.” (EGW, 1T 207)

The “Christian Connection” criticized the belief in the unconditional immortality of the soul even before the Advent movement began, but the essence of that truth was revealed through visions of Ellen White only when appeared a real need that due to the emergence of modern spiritism this truth should be promoted.

Hence, Ellen White’s visions were very important, but not because of confirmation, but because of explanation and drawing attention to the need of promoting these truths.

Ellen White describes how God gives her through vision a light to those truths which the pioneers of Advent movement, through the study of the Scriptures and prayer, could not understand themselves:

“Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word. Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. When they came to the point in their study where they said, “We can do nothing more,” the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me. I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively. Thus light was given that helped us to understand the Scriptures in regard to Christ, his mission, and his priesthood. A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me, and I gave to others the

instruction that the Lord had given me.” (EGW, RH May 25, 1905, par. 24)

“The history of God’s people in these last days is not very different from that of apostolic times. It was also the Holy Spirit who guided the church to an ever clearer perception of divine truth for this time. Our pioneers were not exempt from the danger of heresies and doctrinal errors. Nevertheless, each time the church took a wrong turn, the Holy Spirit, through the prophetic message, guided the believers toward the truth.

In the early days of the message, when our numbers were few, we studied diligently to understand the meaning of many Scriptures. At times it seemed as if no explanation could be given. My mind seemed to be locked to an understanding of the Word; but when our brethren who had assembled for study came to a point where they could go no farther, and had recourse to earnest prayer, the Spirit of God would rest upon me, and I would be taken off in vision, and be instructed in regard to the relation of Scripture to Scripture. These experiences were repeated over and over and over again. Thus many truths of the third angel’s message were established, point by point.

From these historical witnesses, it is clear that the Holy Spirit continued fulfilling His sacred function of being the divine instrument to guide the church into the whole truth by means of the prophetic gift. The development of the doctrines of the church was based on a diligent study of the Scriptures, but when the danger existed of accepting a heretical doctrine or a misinterpretation of the Word, the Spirit used the prophetic gift to give light and guidance to the infant church.” (EGW, VOTS 20.3, 21.4, 22.1)

The fact that lesser light (Spirit of prophecy) points out to the greater light (Bible) doesn’t deny that also in such way Adventist belief was fortified on Scriptures. Lesser light explains the greater. The truth must be understood, and not blindly accepted only because it is written so. When Ellen White explains the methods

of conversation with unlike-minded people, then she discovers the importance of bringing to reason:

“In meeting an opponent, it should be our earnest effort to present subjects in such a manner as to awaken conviction in his mind, instead of seeking merely to give confidence to the believer.” (EGW, T5 708)

THE TERM OF THE DYNAMISM OF TRUTH
CAN BE ONLY IN ITS DEEPER CLARIFICATION
AND NOT IN ITS CHANGE

Neither in Holy Scriptures nor in the works of Ellen White we do not find the term “dynamic” truth nor any synonym which indicates the alleged dynamics of the truth in terms of truth or beliefs which change. We meet with the notion of truth which by its meaning and clear definition becomes unchangeable:

“When the power of God testifies as to what is truth, that truth is to stand forever as the truth. No aftersuppositions, contrary to the light God has given are to be entertained.” (EGW, CW 31.2)

George Knight uses the notion of dynamic concept of “present truth” not to present the dynamic power of truth, nor to point to its revelation as adequate to a particular need, but to present as the truth allegedly can be changed:

“Many Seventh-day Adventists probably haven’t thought of their church’s beliefs as having changed over time. Most likely believe that the founders of the Advent movement held the current doctrinal understandings of Adventism as it enters the twenty-first century. While such a position has much truth, it also harbors a serious misconception. The book’s first chapter indicates the belief of the Adventist pioneers that “present truth” was dynamic (rather than static) and could change as the Holy Spirit led the church in its study of the Bible. Modern Adventism holds the same position. ... At any rate, it is clear that the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church had a

*dynamic concept of what they called “present truth,” opposed creedal rigidity, and had an openness to new theological understandings that built upon the landmark doctrines that had made them a people. Their understanding allowed room for both theological continuity and change.” (George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Beliefs*, 11, 27)*

In order to prove alleged changeability of beliefs as some principle, George Knight provides an example of the difference between quite undefined belief of pioneers of Advent movement and a very clearly defined belief of today’s Adventists.

Of course that a drastic difference exists between the Advent movement and the Adventist Church. Members of the Advent movement, awakened waiting people of the Second Coming of Christ, in addition to the common belief in the imminent coming of Christ, were characterized also by unity in common Protestant beliefs of that time. However, about two decades later, the formed Adventist Church was distinguished by the recognition of the temptation of the Protestantism at that time, through the greater light of truth by which the Adventist church was preserved from that fate that happened to the other disappointed expectants of the Second Coming of Christ.

When a great disappointment occurred in 1844, many associates of the Advent movement showed by their reaction that previous revival they did not use for a real self-examination, repentance and building on Christ. The larger part of these people went back into the world to their sinful living, while the lesser part continued to repeatedly set a new date for the Second Coming of Christ and by the awakening of fanaticism they continued to motivate themselves to religious zeal. From the remains of that small portion of those who have been never really converted, or were converted and then have backslidden, were later formed Jehovah’s Witnesses. But those who have truly been converted, were not ungrateful because of their misconception about Jesus’ coming on a foretold date, but on the basis of their experience of

spiritual new birth they realized that God used a mistake in the calculation for the sake of their conversion.

“We fully believe that God, in His wisdom, designed that His people should meet with a disappointment, which was well calculated to reveal hearts and develop the true characters of those who had professed to look for and rejoice in the coming of the Lord. Those who embraced the first angel’s message (see Revelation 14:6, 7) through fear of the wrath of God’s judgments, not because they loved the truth and desired an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, now appeared in their true light. They were among the first to ridicule the disappointed ones who sincerely longed for and loved the appearing of Jesus. ... The hypocrites, who had hoped to deceive the Lord as well as themselves with their counterfeit penitence and devotion, now felt relieved from impending danger, and openly opposed the cause they had lately professed to love. ... This second great test revealed a mass of worthless drift that had been drawn into the strong current of the advent faith, and been borne along for a time with the true believers and earnest workers.” (EGW, 1T 53.1, 56.2)

From such believers, who passed the test, the Adventist church was formed. This church has defined its doctrine by light that will preserve her from error of the repeated date setting of Jesus’ Second Coming but also from the misconceptions of the world of that time, covered with the form of liberal Protestantism.

However, this process of forming of beliefs of Adventist church does not imply the change of the truth, but the deeper clarifying of the truth. It is absurd to believe that this process of defining could be continued in that same radical extent in which existed the difference between undefined belief of the Advent movement in 1844 (which included common Protestant beliefs of that time) and defined beliefs of the Adventist church as it represented in 1863 (Three Angels’ Messages of Revelation 14). But neither this change was a change in the very essence of belief, but only in its deeper explanation.

“In every age is a new development of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation. The old truths are all essential; new truth is not independent of the old, but an unfolding of it. It is only as the old truths are understood that we can comprehend the new. When Christ desired to open to His disciples the truth of His resurrection, He began “at Moses and all the prophets” and “expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Luke 24:27. But it is the light that shines in the fresh unfolding of truth that glorifies the old. The one who rejects or neglects the new one does not really possess the old one. For him it loses its vital power and becomes but a lifeless form. There are those who profess to believe and teach the truths of the Old Testament, while they reject the New. But in refusing to receive the teachings of Christ, they show that they do not believe in which patriarchs and prophets have spoken.” (EGW, COL 127.4-128.1)

But in order to prove the variability of belief, George Knight claims:

“Most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to agree to the denomination’s “27 Fundamental Beliefs”.” (George R. Knight, A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Beliefs, 17)

And then he claims that the majority of pioneers of Advent movement were advocating antitrinitarian views.

The question arises: would the pioneers of Advent movement who were denying the Trinity, consider so important a question of Trinity, that they would make of it a testing truth and because of it reject the teaching of our church? Would those, who had previously believed in the message of William Miller, who was a trinitarian, now make a crucial question of it?

Although many early Adventists who came from the movement “Christian Connection” had a critical attitude towards the Trinity, they weren’t making of this issue a testing truth. Especially not those of them who joined the Sabbath observers. Knight

himself admits by quoting James White that some believers were “of a disposition to draw off from the great truths connected with the Third [Angel’s] Message, to points of no vital importance” (EGW, RH, Dec. 31, 1857, 61).

James White considered that question of the Trinity was unimportant to be debated about or to be criticized as a kind of alleged error of Babylon, or that any testing truth should be made of it:

“In the divine law, and in the gospel of the divine Son, are the tests of Christian character. And it is with an ill grace that those who have been splitting up into petty sects during the nineteenth century over forms of church government, matters of expediency, free and restricted salvation, trinity and unity, whether we may sing any good hymn in church, or only the Psalms of David, and other matters which constitute no test of fitness for Heaven, now pounce upon us, and display any amount of religious horror, simply because we regard strict conformity to the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus the only true test of Christian character.” (From James Wright’s article” Christian Unity”) James White, RH, October 12, 1876, p. 116.

Therefore, we can not claim that pioneers of the Advent movement would sacrifice their unity about those issues that they considered very important, in order to represent those views that they considered less important, but which, due to insignificance, they did not planned to take into a serious consideration.

And finally, if a belief in the Trinity at the time of the Adventist pioneers were revealed to them by the same arguments that it is defined today, would they have a different spirit than we have today and reject this truth?!

Contemporary 28 beliefs are not adopted as some blind dogmas, so we could test the pioneers of the Advent movement by their attitude toward the critique of trinitarianism, denial of Saturday as biblical Sabbath, or a stance toward the prohibition of unclean food. New light always came with a reasonable clarification. And more importantly, what George Knight completely

loses from sight, a new light has always come as a response to the new need of the world, the church and the remnant, about what we will talk about when we explain the concepts of the present truth.

Therefore, although in the beginning many pioneers of Adventism as individuals had a negative attitude towards certain points of faith of modern Adventists (concerning the Trinity, Sabbath, the prohibition on unclean food, etc.), we cannot claim that they represented their views as important and official attitudes of the Advent movement. Consequently, we cannot even claim that by gradual defining of its belief the Adventist church was changing its beliefs. She simply defined it more clearly, still retaining her church unity. Ellen White advocated the principle that less important issues shouldn't be placed as an obstacle for church unity that is formed around those truths that are at a certain moment important, and that the differences about minor issues must then be sacrificed:

“We tried to make our differences as slight as possible by not dwelling on points that were of minor importance, upon which there were varying opinions. ... Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed.” (EGW, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers 25, 30)

“Whenever the Lord has a special work to do among his people, when he would arouse their minds to contemplate vital truth, Satan will work to divert the mind by introducing minor points of difference, in order that he may create an issue concerning doctrines that are not essential to the understanding of the point in hand, and thus bring about disunion, and distract attention from the essential point. When this occurs, the Lord is at work making impressions upon the hearts of men, concerning that which is necessary to their salvation. Then if Satan can draw the mind away to some unimportant issue,

and cause the people to divide on some minor point, so that their hearts are barricaded against light and truth, he exults in malicious triumph. This he has done in the past, and this he purposes to do still, in order that he may cast his hellish shadow between the people and their God, and cut off the light that the Lord would have shine upon his children.” (EGW, RH October 18, 1892, par. 14)

“The discussion of unimportant points occupied time that should have been spent in proclaiming the gospel. The masses were left unwarned.” (EGW, *From Trials to Triumph*, 304.1)

But let’s now define what is important and what is irrelevant.

Understanding of the notion “important” is necessary in order to understand the notion of “the present truth”, i.e., “the truth for our time” and to distinguish it from false reform movements that distract believers from the message that is really a response to the temptation that they have.

THE CONCEPT OF “PRESENT TRUTH” RESPONDS TO THE LIGHT THAT IS THE RESPONSE TO THE TEMPTATION OF A PRESENT MOMENT

George Knight declares that irrelevant are those truths that are not clearly defined by the Scriptures. This conviction he tries to underlay to Ellen White herself, distortedly interpreting her following words:

“Brethren, as an ambassador of Christ I warn you to beware of these side issues, whose tendency is to divert the mind from the truth. Error is never harmless. It never sanctifies, but always brings confusion and dissension. It is always dangerous. The enemy has great power over minds that are not thoroughly fortified by prayer and established in Bible truth.” (EGW, CW 46.2)

Referring to those words, George Knight continues:

“That is still good counsel. A healthy Adventism will always concentrate on the central themes of its message. It becomes

*unhealthy when it seeks to focus on issues not clearly taught in the Bible, when it raises the minors from God's perspective to the center of Adventist concern. The church constantly needs to remember that anything not clearly taught in the Bible is not in any way a candidate for becoming a doctrine." (George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Beliefs*, 204)*

So, according to George Knight, irrelevant are those truths that in the Holy Scriptures are not already clearly explained. But our responsibility is to examine whether there is a real practical need for deeper explanation of those truths that are found in the Bible, but which are not clearly explained in it.

We can notice that through history every new light has come as a response to the particular temptations in which somebody was, precisely because the previously revealed light was not sufficiently clearly explained so it could help the one who was tempted. That is why the contents of the Scripture were expanded with each new revelation.

God gave the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone, but to make clear the sense of these commandments, God through Moses explained the meaning of the law clearer than revealed in the Decalogue.

While the Decalogue says, "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14), Moses explains that God's law is looking at the very heart-motives: "And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after." (Numbers 15:39)

While the Decalogue says, "You shall not murder." (Exodus 20:13), Moses explains the purpose of the commandment: "You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against

the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.” (Leviticus 19:16-18)

Thus, even though the light revealed through the words of Moses is greater, it is in accordance with the Decalogue's commandments and is in fact only a clearer and greater explanation of the Decalogue, and not some kind of dynamic truth that is different from revealed commandments of the Decalogue.

That each new light through the history of the conflict between good and evil came as a response to the particular temptations in which somebody was, we see through the analysis of the content of the revelation of each new light.

As the needs of people differed, so the visions that explained the truth differed. And the differences in the need for different light were adequate to the differences in temptations.

When the Israelites were openly violating the law, for them the healing truth was - an open reprimand for iniquity (for open idolatry and adultery). And when, after the departure from Babylonian captivity, the Israelites fell into temptation of formalism, legalism and false moralizing, they needed to be given a different light, but with the same goal, to become aware of the need for reforming the motives of the heart and for their reconciliation with God:

“I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices; a people who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and making offerings on bricks; who sit in tombs, and spend the night in secret places; who eat pig's flesh, and broth of tainted meat is in their vessels; who say, “Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am too holy for you.” These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all the day.” (Isaiah 65:2-5)

If people have forgotten about God by dwelling upon themselves (by trying to be saved by good deeds) or have never known Him, they will be tempted when they hear about moral demands to seek the power to fulfill them in their own sinful heart and

their self-righteous conscience. Such attempts are burdensome attempts, and naturally they lead either to discouragement or fanaticism. The only motive of repentance that a man can find within himself is repentance from the disgrace of insulted pride, the fear of unclean conscience, or from the sadness of selfish sentiment. The Holy Scriptures bring a cure for such temptation:

“And the Lord said: “Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden.” “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.”” (Isaiah 29:13-14; 45:23)

In order to save people from temptation to seek power to keep the law in themselves, God first delivers Israelites from Egyptian bondage, and only after that He reveals the requirements of the law. He first rescues from the Babylonian slavery, and then reminds them of the requirements of the law they have violated. In this way, raising the look of their trust towards Heaven, the strength of their repentance is being based on the awareness of God's goodness, and not on the fanaticism of their own self-confidence.

“Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” (Romans 2,4)

At the time of Jesus' birth, the state of Israelite nation was such a spiritual deadness that firstly John the Baptist had, with his Nazirite modesty, to reprimand the hedonism of the people of that time and by sharp reprimands to move lulled human conscience:

“He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham

as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.'" (Luke 3:7-14)

If John the Baptist hadn't carried out the rebuke adequate to the need which moved the lulled conscience, the Jews would not be ready in Christ to recognize the answer for their spiritual needs. Ellen White that clearly explains:

"The message that God had given him to bear was designed to startle them from their lethargy, and cause them to tremble because of their great wickedness. Before the seed of the gospel could find lodgment, the soil of the heart must be broken up. Before they would seek healing from Jesus, they must be awakened to their danger from the wounds of sin. God does not send messengers to flatter the sinner. He delivers no message of peace to lull the unsanctified into fatal security. He lays heavy burdens upon the conscience of the wrongdoer, and pierces the soul with arrows of conviction. The ministering angels present to him the fearful judgments of God to deepen the sense of need, and prompt the cry, "What must I do to be saved?" Then the hand that has humbled in the dust, lifts up the penitent. The voice that has rebuked sin, and put to shame pride and ambition, inquires with tenderest sympathy, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" (E.G.White, DA 104.1)

In order to Jesus' sacrifice of redemption be recognized as the only way of reconciling a man with God, it was necessary for

Jews first to understand the neglected spirit and purpose of God's law. Besides conscience, which is initiated by John the Baptist, the wisdom was necessary to make people realize the spirit of the law and become aware of their sinfulness. Therefore, in the course of three and a half years of His work on earth, Jesus Christ does not preach and explain His sacrifice as an essential message for that moment, but the spirit of the law, and refers to His sacrifice only as a truth that will be recognized only after it has been fulfilled. Jesus puts emphasize on the explanation that God's law is looking at the motives of heart and the sense of behavior, while about his sacrifice He does not discuss neither with His disciples nor with the Pharisees.

Without the proper understanding of the spirit of the law, the Jews, satisfied with their formal self-control and external righteousness, would completely stifle the awareness of their sinfulness and guilt, as well as the need for the Holy Spirit who changes the human hearts, and the need for Jesus' sacrifice of redemption. Even later, in the time of the apostles, we see that each epistle was the answer to the specific temptations of those to whom it was addressed.

Every church in history preached that doctrine which was the answer to the temptation of the people of their time. Each of the seven churches from Revelation represents one epoch with specific temptations and a specific response to the temptation.

New light was explaining those truths that, on the basis of previous light, were not clear, but the compliance of the new light with the previously revealed, was the criterion whether a new light was really from God. The apostles proclaim the Gospel in words that represent greater light and clearer explanation of the truth than the truth revealed at the time of the Old Testament; but the books of the Old Testament are the test whether the words of the apostles are true. Thus the apostles praise those believers who by the Old Testament's scripts verify the truthfulness of that what they preach: "Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, exa-

mining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.” (Acts 17:11) Likewise, the Spirit of prophecy, which was foretold as a feature of the church of the last days, represents a great light of truth adequate to the darkness of the last days, without whom we can hardly be preserved from Satanic delusions of this time. But this light of the Spirit of prophecy must be subject to verification through compliance with the previously revealed light of the Holy Scriptures. The fact that apostles called upon the Old Testament records as a test of the correctness of what they said, does not mean that they said that their light is unnecessary because the Old Testament already exists. Likewise, we need to differentiate the notion of authority from the notion of an explanation, when we talk about the writings of Ellen White in relation to the Bible.

We can observe that the Bible itself, although the authority of truthfulness of each other light, does not represent in itself the greatest and clearest revelation of truth, otherwise we would not have the need to explain it by our own words, nor would we need the gift of wisdom, teaching, and the gift of prophecy.

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ... Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. ... On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.” (1 Corinthians 12:7-8; 14:1.3)

“Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.” (Proverbs 29:18)

If the words of the Scripture are quoted without additional explanation, they can stay unclear or can be distortedly understood, often “by the letter” and not by its real sense. That is why instead of a mere quotation of the Bible, we are responsible to explain the Bible in our own words so inspiringly that it could be reasonably understandable in its own sense:

“They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.” (Nehemiah 8:8)

From the heart dedicated to God, the Holy Spirit will easily speak a good word to the weary or sharp rebuke to the self-satisfied:

“The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.” (Proverbs 16:1)

Therefore, our words of explanation, and not the words of the Holy Scriptures by the letter, will be the greatest light to a person at the moment of severe temptation.

When in one discussion I presented the previous claims, one person was shocked to hear the claim that some words that are not from the Scriptures may be greater light of explanation than the Scriptures. I asked her to continue from now on with quoting verses from the Scriptures, instead of using her personal words, “in order not to put her own words above God’s”, as naturally follows from her logic.

Similarly I answered the person who, when I quoted Ellen White, told me that Ellen White was not authority to her. I told her, “You are not an authority to me either, so do I need to close my ears to your words?!?”

George Knight also distortedly interprets quotations of Ellen White when she says that her writings should not be placed in the same ranking with the Holy Scriptures in authority, as if this means that they should not be cited at all. In fact, it’s not the same to quote someone as if he is the supreme authority of truth, or to quote him as the one who explains what supreme authority of truth is saying.

If I quote Ellen White, this does not mean that I quote her as someone I should blindly trust, but it means that I quote her as someone who gives reasonable answers to the existing needs.

People weakly make a difference between the authority of the truth and a reasonable explanation of the truth, especially when they themselves are afraid to use reason and when they do not

bring arguments to their claims by explaining the meaning, but by referring to their own belief that they think so. But the truth that is not understood by its sense, and which can not be defended by the arguments of common sense, is worthless, because it does not help a person to distinguish between good and evil at the time of temptation.

And whether we will, in order to explain the truth better, quote Ellen White, words of our acquaintance, or perhaps words of a non-Christian writer, or our own words, it does not matter.

It is important to respond to the need of that person and by exalted revelation of truth to help her in her choice, that she can clearly distinguish good from evil in order to overcome temptation.

REAL LOVE IS REASONABLE ANSWER TO THE NEED

We are called to responsibly and reasonably examine what are the real needs of those to whom we preach, in order to provide them with an adequate response to their temptations:

“And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.” (Jude 1:22-23)

It takes a responsible relation to this issue, because the truth that is a cure for some people, for others can be poison.

At the time of Martin Luther, the main temptation of the Catholics was justification by deeds and use of indulgences, which is why God raised Luther to answer through him to the needs of the moment. If Martin Luther had preached to the Catholics a message of the prophet Jonah: “Yet forty days, and you shall be overthrown!” he would only lead them to greater fanaticism. Catholics would give larger sums of money to the priests and more times a day repeat “Ave Maria”. But Luther preached what was the true answer for the temptation of these people - the doctrine of justification by faith, rebuking with this a false doctrine. And if, for example, the prophet Jonah preached to the Ninevites the message “God loves you! Salvation is by faith without the deeds

of the law!” none would have repented of their iniquities, but in such message they would find an excuse for their iniquities. The Ninevites would agree with the idea that God is love, but they would understand it as an excuse for unrepentance. To preach to those who live lawlessly the message of the cross, is to give them an excuse for even greater lawlessness, which in his time noticed also Martin Luther:

“The ungodly out of the Gospel suck only a carnal freedom, and become worse thereby; therefore, not the Gospel, but the law belongs to them. Even as when my little son John offends, if then I should not whip him, but call him to the table to me, and give him sugar-plums, thereby I should make him worse, yea, quite spoil him.” (The Table Talk of Martin Luther, CCLXXXVII)

Therefore, to those who openly violate the law, the cure is an open reprimand for lawlessness. This is the content of the three angels’ messages (Revelation 14: 7-12). And to those who keep the law formally, the rebuke for open lawlessness would only be a poison by which they would deceive themselves that they are right. If to the lukewarm church of Laodicea, whose believers keep the law but in their own strength, we bring reproach against the incorrect life that is adequate to the cold, and not to the lukewarm church, such reproach will only underpin the Pharisaic self-complacency of the majority. Formalists and legalists like to hear the rebuke of open lawlessness, because they do not recognize themselves in it, but others, so they feel themselves more righteous in relation to them.

Even if the Laodicean recognizes himself as an open violator of the law, it is not a guarantee for his actual repentance. He may then even eagerly accept the reproach and by correcting his behavior become even more satisfied Laodicean. (Does not every Pharisee yearn for the advice that will help him to become an even better Pharisee?) His perception of perfection is often a poison for his own spirit. Therefore, Jesus’ message to Laodicea rebukes the problem of church members in their root:

“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.” (Revelation 3:15-17)

The problem of Laodicean are the heart motives, and for that reason Ellen White explains that formal criticism is not spiritual food for those individuals and entire churches who have temptation of laodiceanism:

“The design of the message to the Laodiceans was to rid the church of just such fanatical influences; but the effort of Satan has been to corrupt the message, and destroy its influence. He would be better pleased to have fanatical persons embrace the testimony, and use it in his cause, than to have them remain in a lukewarm state. I have seen that it was not the design of the message to lead brother to sit in judgment over his brother, to tell him what to do, and just how far to go; but for each individual to search his own heart, and attend to his own individual work.” (EGW, 2SG 223)

As we see, it's not correct to preach the message for the world, that rebukes the open lawlessness, to those believers who have a temptation of Laodicean legalism, nor it is correct the message for the church to preach to the world. While the three angels' messages are messages for the world, the Laodicean message is a message for the church. However, we have also a message for the remnant.

What happens when Laodicean becomes aware of his temptation, that he is actually poor, naked and blind?

As he is accustomed to believing in himself and seeking righteousness in his own heart instead of believing in God, the awareness that he is poor in spirit leads him into heavy discouragement with himself, because he learned to trust only in himself. While he was satisfied with himself, Satan tempted him with self-complacency. Now that he has become aware that he is

sinful, Satan is tempting him with discouragement. And maybe after many years of relying on himself, Laodicean finally realizes that he does not have confidence in God and does not know Him, because for years he has dwelt upon himself, and not upon God. He was content with himself and his laodicean righteousness, and God was not essentially necessary to him.

But God has a healing message for the remnant that has become aware of their spiritual poverty. In the chapter “The Shaking” of the book “Early Writings” by Ellen White we find God’s encouragement to those who have become aware of their own self-deception. God’s message to them is that they do not put their view from Christ down to themselves lest they fail:

“Evil angels crowded around, pressing darkness upon them to shut out Jesus from their view, that their eyes might be drawn to the darkness that surrounded them, and thus they be led to distrust God and murmur against Him. Their only safety was in keeping their eyes directed upward.” (EGW, EW 269.2)

Therefore, God has a message that is a respond to temptation of everyone - the world, the church, and the remnant.

Today, the temptation of majority of atheists as well as believers of the apostate Christianity is not a justification by the deeds of the law, but an open lawlessness. In all Christian churches can be seen the movements of false reformation who preach that God’s law is a burden and that it is abolished on the cross, while the concept of love they present in a distorted way, as if love is a feeling. We are also witnesses of the abuse of music during worship, which is used as a method of inebriating and suffocating of a man’s consciousness about the need for God. Popular music, as well as marijuana or meditation, causes a leap of dopamine and endorphins that block the orbitofrontal cortex charged for responsible thinking and decision making, so that man is no longer aware of his irreconciliation with God. Let’s notice that “in order to receive help from Christ, we must realize our need. We must have a true knowledge of ourselves. It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save. Only as we

see our utter helplessness and renounce all self-trust, shall we lay hold on divine power.” (EGW, MH 455).

Such a state of the world and apostate Christianity demands the light of truth that is the answer to their temptation.

The truth that is an adequate response to the temptations of the current moment is the “truth for the present time”, i.e. “the present truth”. Love is always an adequate answer to the need:

“Different periods in the history of the church have each been marked by the development of some special truth, adapted to the necessities of God’s people at that time. Every new truth has made its way against hatred and opposition; those who were blessed with its light were tempted and tried.” (EGW, GC 609.1)

George Knight considers that present truth is the truth which is at this moment recognized as a discovered truth, while in Ellen White’s writings present truth is the truth which is the response to the needs of people today. Advocates of the Knight’s philosophy interpret the light of truth about the justification by faith, which in 1888 came through Wagoner and Jones, as if that light was an expression of natural progress in the development of truth, and not an answer to the need and temptations of the church of that time. Accordingly, some of them are devaluing the writings of Ellen White written before 1888, believing that they are incorrect because they are emphasizing the law and not justification by faith. They do not realize that the truth has not changed. They do not realize that the emphasis on the truth about the law was curable to the decadent world and the church in the previous period of church history, but that, over time, a new temptation was formed - the temptation of legalism and formalism that demanded an emphasis on the truth about justification by faith. Of course, and to those modern Adventist church communities overpowered by liberalism, more suitable is the message which Adventism preached before 1888 than after that year, because the focus on the truth of the law is the cure for those who have the temptation of open lawlessness.

Therefore, in the year 1888, of the revolutionary significance was that under the concept of present truth to promote the truth about justification by faith. Although this truth was made known to Western man from the very appearance of the Reformation, and so known to Adventists before 1888, it then became a healing for the emerging temptation of legalism. Ellen White told delegates in Minneapolis that Wagoner's teaching of "the righteousness of Christ" is "not new, but old light which has been lost sight of by many minds" (MS 15, 1888). "Dr. Waggoner has opened to you precious light, not new, but old light which has been lost sight of by many minds and is now shining forth in clear rays." (Ms15-1888. 47) But today is harder for believers to be justified by faith than in 1888, not because they are not familiar with the doctrine of justification by faith, but because they became liberal in relation to the law so they understand less the depth of the law's demands than believers from 1888. The very truth of the justification by faith has no magical power to make man justified by faith, if he didn't previously, in the light of God's law, become aware of his spiritual poverty and thus aware of the need for Christ's righteousness. Therefore, without the accepting the message of Laodicea, it is impossible to be justified by faith.

At the same time, besides the "present truth" which is the answer to the real needs of the people in the present temptation, there are also "present delusions" that provide to people an excuse to fall into the temptation in which they are. In the time of general lawlessness, it is a delusion that Jesus abolished God's commandments on the cross. Of course, in the term "present delusion" we can include also those messages that are true by the letter, but are not the answer to our temptations. Job's friends presented to the righteous Job, who was in the great distress, very wise truths, but which were not the answer to his temptation. Likewise, some delusions can be inspiredly used in a way that they represent "the present truth," even though they are untrue by the letter. The message that Jesus would come in 1844 was incorrect, but it was inspired by God so that it represented a call for

reexamination and repentance. Likely, the Jews interpreted Jesus' sermon about the Kingdom of God - as if He would liberate Jews from Roman slavery, but the Holy Spirit used this delusion to direct their attention to hear from Jesus the truth about eternal salvation. Though untrue by the letter, these are again truths in spirit, for when we die, Jesus to us has already come, then for us came the kingdom of God.

Some falsehoods occur in such a context that they do not require God to intervene by exposing them.

The delusion of predestination was not an obstacle to spiritual growth at the time of Reformation, when the concept of law was exalted. But today, in so-called "Evangelical Christianity" which is deprived of the lofty demands of God's law, a belief in predestination becomes the foundation of the delusion "once saved, always saved" whereby believers are freed from the daily struggle against sin because they believe that they will never be able to lose the once accomplished salvation because they are convinced that God "has chosen" them.

Luther's anti-Semitic speeches against the Jews failed to instigate the hatred of the people towards them at a time when the Gospel doctrine had already brought its fruits. Luther was embittered by the fact that the Jews refused to accept the reformed Christian faith and thus lost his, until that time, friendly attitude towards them. The Jewish propensity to deal with trade and usury (that is weaved in the foundations of contemporary banking) he considered dangerous because of promotion of unproductive work; their religious exclusivity (for they did not consider non-Jews to be men in the full sense of the word) he considered as sufficient reason for a decree to burn their religious schools and for their expulsion. But when people have love in their hearts, then it is not a problem for them to love others although they disagree with them, although they do not approve of their actions. The leader of the German Jews realized that among the Protestants the authority of the Scriptures surpasses the authority of Martin Luther, and he succeeded, by making a reference

to the words of the Scripture, to “make the annulment of a significant number of anti-Jewish decrees in this Protestant country even in spite of the Lutheran decrees” (Ш. Эттингер, *Очерки по истории Еврейского народа*, 363). Despite the hate speech, nowhere else in the world did Jews find a better and safer refuge than in Protestant countries because Luther’s decrees against the Jews were quickly abolished as opposed to the evangelical spirit of Protestantism at that time. But the same Luther’s speeches against the Jews became an excuse for Nazi crimes, when the authority of the Holy Scripture was replaced by authority of *Mein Kampf*. Whenever the spirit of Christ’s love is replaced by the spirit of hypocritical self-control and forced discipline, the need for false moralizing and judging naturally distorts critique in the tool of psychical emptying, rather than benevolent service to others.

Antitrinitarianism did not represent any problem to the pioneers of the Advent movement, because behind it there wasn’t hidden the spirit of arrogance, rebellion and hatred. But today, when antitrinitarianism and most of its advocates think that whoever believes in Trinity violates the First Commandment of God, and that he is a member of Babylon, and that this issue is the testing truth of faith in God, antitrinitarianism becomes a problem which reveals formalistic understanding of the demands of God’s law and a total misunderstanding of the warning to Laodicea, which is the only real cure for temptation of the church. In fact, in early Adventism there were also such antitrinitarians that made of the topic of Trinity the testing truth, but they refused to accept the light of the heavenly Sanctuary, so they didn’t join the Seventh-day Adventists, but they, while keeping the spirit of formal quibbling and expressed rebellion against other Protestants and Catholics, soon formed the community of Jehovah’s Witnesses. The spirit of contemporary Adventist antitrinitarians is very similar to the spirit of Jehovah’s Witnesses. The Omega of apostasy (*Spiritual Formation*, etc.) is much more dangerous than antitrinitarianism because it comes through the church ad-

ministration itself, but previously the church has to, through the heresy of antitrinitarianism, be cleansed from all those rebellious and suspicious people who would by their unrenewed Ego make ineffective the struggle against the delusions of the Omega of apostasy. They most often criticize the delusion by superficial arguments that don't help the deluded to realize his problem, and often, in a significant moment, due to their unconquered anger, they don't have a clear conscience to personally reproach a man who needs to be reproached. God cleans the church from such people through heresies:

“God will arouse His people; if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat.” (EGW, GW 299.1)

“The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place.” (EGW, 2SM 380.2)

These words reveal that the Adventist church will not fall, although it will have to wait heavy temptations where heresies, troubles and persecution will expel out of its ranks the unconverted and unconsecrated.

Sometimes even clear biblical truth can be harmful as well as delusion, if we tell it in inappropriate context and in the moment when it is not an answer the burning need.

“Proverbs told by fools will be rejected, because they'll never tell them at their proper time.” (Sirach 20:20-22)

We are dependent on Holy Spirit who enlightens our minds in order to safely recognize the real need of another person, although obvious reasonable facts can help us in it. For example, if to a traditional Christian, of unconverted heart, we preach the truth about the Sabbath, we can thus lead him to replace the formal observance of Sunday with the formal observance of the Sabbath, and to keep the Sabbath out of those same self-righteous motives (guilt, pride, selfish sentiment) out of which he formally adheres

to the rest of the commandments. Jesus warns us to take care of the foundations on which a person will accept our instruction:

“No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins.” (Mark 2:21-22)

Only when such persons, by realizing more elementary truths, change their foundations from reliance on themselves to reliance on God, and experience spiritual new birth of their hearts, then it would make sense to hear the truth about the Sabbath, which to them then won't be a yoke that they couldn't bear, but a blessing from God:

“You should not feel it your duty to introduce arguments upon the Sabbath question as you meet the people. If persons mention the subject, tell them that this is not your burden now. But when they surrender heart and mind and will to God, they are then prepared candidly to weigh evidence in regard to these solemn, testing truths.” (EGW, Letter 77, 1895.)

If the truth is presented more than the Holy Ghost can explain it to the man and direct him through it to the Lord, a man will, in his distrust in God, rely on himself and incite the fanatic motives of his nature to keep it. Strong evidence can force a person to become pious even though he may not want it. It is interesting in what words Ellen White explains why God did not, in the time of Martin Luther, disclose all of the truth that was forgotten through thousand years of church apostasy:

“God permitted great light to shine upon the minds of these chosen men, revealing to them many of the errors of Rome; but they did not receive all the light that was to be given to the world. Through these, His servants, God was leading the people out of the darkness of Romanism; but there were many and great obstacles for them to meet, and He led them on, step by step, as they could bear it. They were not prepared to

receive all the light at once. Like the full glory of the noon-tide sun to those who have long dwelt in darkness, it would, if presented, have caused them to turn away. Therefore He revealed it to the leaders little by little, as it could be received by the people. From century to century, other faithful workers were to follow, to lead the people on still further in the path of reform.” (EGW, GC 103.1)

Too great light of truth would instigate fanaticism at that historic moment. Not because they, delighted with the truth of God’s character, were led to repentance, but under the influence of great light which they can not deny, many would join God’s people and then, working in their own power instead of God’s, they would bring damage to the cause of God within the community itself. Unconverted believers misinterpret the sense of truth and place emphasis on irrelevant details and so draw attention away from the truth that is the answer to the temptation. Ellen White warns of their bad influence as the greatest obstacle to God’s work and the reason why God closes the doors of the church to people from the world:

“We have far more to fear from within than from without. The hindrances to strength and success are far greater from the church itself than from the world.” (EGW, 1SM 122.3)

“But great care should be exercised in accepting members into the church; for Satan has his specious devices through which he purposes to crowd false brethren into the church, through whom he can work more successfully to weaken the cause of God.” (EGW, RH January 10, 1893, par. 2)

“A holy God will not bring out souls to the truth to come under such an influence as has existed in the church. Our heavenly Father is too wise to bring souls into the truth to be molded by the influence of these men who are unconsecrated in heart and life.” (EGW, 4T 238.1)

“The Lord does not now work to bring many souls into the truth, because of the church members who have never been

converted and those who were once converted but who have backslidden. What influence would these unconsecrated members have on new converts? Would they not make of no effect the God-given message which His people are to bear?" (EGW, 6T 370.3)

Only when exists a heretical delusion that is very similar to the original, the real church is preserved from such believers by shaking and departure of these believers into heretical communities and movements:

“For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” (1 Corinthians 11:19)

While the truth helps us to be cleansed from the sin of our hearts and be truly consecrated, the delusion helps the church to be cleansed from those who are unconsecrated in the heart.

We see the principle of God’s inspiration in the interpretation of truth always in such a way that it makes the person aware of the need to conquer temptation that he currently has. While our message should disturb conscience of the unrepentant, to those who recognized the need of the soul it should raise the look of confidence to Christ and to the free gift of salvation. Satan, however, distortedly interprets gospel call in a way that he leads a man to rely on himself and to initiate motives of his own righteousness (his feelings, pride...) and to silence the voice of conscience. Also, he makes him with burdened conscience, deprived of sound judgment, to lead the fight at the wrong level (to repent for the symptoms of sin in behavior, instead of sin at the level of the motives of the heart). Therefore, we should be wise to preach the message that people will accept, not because it excuses their favorite sins, but because it helps them to overcome these sins.

The Holy Scriptures describe false prophets who lull the conscience of those who need rebuke, and reprimand those who rebuke evil:

“For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.” (Jeremiah 6:13-14)

“Because you have disheartened the righteous falsely, although I have not grieved him, and you have encouraged the wicked, that he should not turn from his evil way to save his life.” (Ezekiel 13:22)

At the time of the general lawlessness, the vast majority of Christians by their apostate doctrine flatters the temptation of the majority, disregarding the demands of God’s law, or even claiming that the commandments are abolished on the cross.

We have a question - which church with its present truth represents the true answer to the temptation of our time?

Which church to this world, who lives in a foretold lawlessness, preaches the importance of the neglected law of God?

Which church at this time of hedonism carries out with its doctrine the rebuke for intemperance and viciousness?

Which church to the careless ones who say, “My master is delayed” (Matthew 24:48), carries out the rebuke about the soon coming of God’s judgment?

We claim that Adventist Church is the one true church, which is the “pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15) exactly because by its doctrine it represents a response to the temptations that people have today.

To those who today lull their conscience with the words, “My master is delayed” (Matthew 24:48), our church brings warning: “Fear God and give him glory” (Revelation 14:7).

To those who live in the temptation of lawlessness, our doctrine brings out the truth about the importance and the depth of demands of God’s law.

To those who live in the temptation of hedonism, our doctrine presents the principles of healthy diet and the principles of temperance.

Many today live in Babylon, which represents a set of fallen churches. These churches with their wrong doctrine represent such a danger to true believers, that God invites them to leave their communities, with explanation “lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues” (Revelation 18:4), because “she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” (Revelation 14:8). All those specific temptations and delusions of the last days demand the answer that God gave through the prophetic gift of Ellen White.

THE LIGHT OF THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY IS NECESSARY PROTECTION FROM TEMPTATIONS OF THE LAST DAYS

As each new light in history was coming to reveal more clearly the light of truth which, on the basis of the earlier light, was not clearly revealed, so God through Ellen White gave us the revelation of those truths for our time which will help us resist heavy delusions and temptations of the last days, and which have not been revealed to us through the Holy Scriptures, because in biblical history they did not exist as temptations.

On one occasion I met with a group of Baptists who were deeply dissatisfied with the liberal spirit of their Baptist church, so they decided to establish a new Baptist church on the basis of the Baptist Convention of 1689 (1689 Baptist Confession of Faith). They were convinced that the return to the truth of 1689 would be a solution to the crisis in which their church is today. I immediately wrote and held a lecture at the Adventist Church, recorded it and sent to them. I explained that the light which Baptists defined in 1689 was God’s answer to temptations of that time, but that light is powerless to respond to the temptations of today.

Has God stopped with Reformation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?

No, God all the time had His remnant and a church that had progressively greater light of truth that was the answer to every step of decadence of the modern man. What light is the answer

to the temptations of the Baptist Church and other evangelical churches today?

To find this out, let's first define what temptations they have today, and didn't have three centuries ago?

What temptations we immediately notice at the worship of evangelical Christians? These are:

Seducing of believers with sentiment and stifling of conscience with fun;

Excessive mutual closeness; Neglected requirements of God's Law (Advocating that the Ten Commandments are a slavish yoke and abolished on the cross); Wrong notion of concept of true love and the conversion of the heart; Seeking evidence of a communion with God in signs, wonders and false spiritual gifts; Shifting of man's own responsibility of choosing from himself to God; and Abuse of music.

The mentioned temptations didn't exist in 1689, and that is why I had to explain to the Baptists that the Baptist Convention of that year doesn't have a cure for their today's problem. These are the temptations of the modern era and the light that clearly exposes them we find exclusively in the gift of the Spirit of the prophecy of the Church of the last days. The same applies to the temptation of Spiritual Formation where we meet some additional delusions:

Abuse of the feelings through mystical experience (contemplation, meditation...); Reliance on support groups; Reliance on another person who thinks instead of us; Looking for salvation in confessing secret sins to other people; and many other modern delusions that haven't been a temptation of people in biblical times to be mentioned and unmasked in the Scriptures.

But these delusions are today the temptation of Babylon and the temptation of the Omega of apostasy that occurs in the Adventist church itself, and that's why the Spirit of prophecy, revealed through the works of Ellen White, is necessary to disclose these temptations.

Ellen White exposes the wrong function of feelings:

“When self is submerged in Christ, true love springs forth spontaneously. It is not an emotion or an impulse, but a decision of a sanctified will. It consists not in feeling, but in the transformation of the whole heart, soul, and character, which is dead to self and alive unto God.” (6BC 1100)

Ellen White criticizes the sermons that arouse feelings by which a person is inebriated and by which her need for God is stifled:

“The minister may think that with his fanciful eloquence he has done great things in feeding the flock of God; the hearers may suppose that they never before heard such beautiful themes, they have never seen the truth dressed up in such beautiful language, and as God was represented before them in His greatness, they felt a glow of emotion. But trace from cause to effect all this ecstasy of feeling caused by these fanciful representations. There may be truths, but too often they are not the food that will fortify them for the daily battles of life.” (EGW, Manuscript 59, 1900.)

Ellen White warns of false spiritual gifts that cause unhealthy excitement:

“Some of these persons have exercises which they call gifts and say that the Lord has placed them in the church. They have an unmeaning gibberish which they call the unknown tongue, which is unknown not only by man but by the Lord and all heaven. Such gifts are manufactured by men and women, aided by the great deceiver. Fanaticism, false excitement, false talking in tongues, and noisy exercises have been considered gifts which God has placed in the church. Some have been deceived here. The fruits of all this have not been good. “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” Fanaticism and noise have been considered special evidences of faith. Some are not satisfied with a meeting unless they have a powerful and happy time. They work for this and get up an excitement of feeling. But the influence of such meetings is not beneficial.

When the happy flight of feeling is gone, they sink lower than before the meeting because their happiness did not come from the right source. The most profitable meetings for spiritual advancement are those which are characterized with solemnity and deep searching of heart; each seeking to know himself, and earnestly, and in deep humility, seeking to learn of Christ.” (EGW, 1T 412.1)

Ellen White warns of the tendency of seeking salvation in the feeling of closeness with other people:

“You can be happy in Him if you had not another friend in the wide world.” (EGW, Lt 2b, 1874. HC 259.) Ellen White criticizes those who “have not within them the power to be happy; but they depend for happiness upon the company of other youth...” (EGW, PYM 431)

“Do not think that sentimentalism is a religion. Shake off all human aids and rely firmly on Christ.” (EGW, HS 137.5)

“The Majesty of heaven identifies his interests with that of suffering humanity. Our associates and companions are in need of heart-felt kindness and tender sympathy. But the love and sympathy which Jesus would have us give to others does not savor of sentimentalism, which is a snare to the soul; it is a love that is of heavenly extraction, which Jesus exemplifies by both precept and example.” (YI October 20, 1892, par. 4)

“Christ carried out in His life His own divine teachings. His zeal never led Him to become passionate. He manifested consistency without obstinacy, benevolence without weakness, tenderness and sympathy without sentimentalism. He was highly social, yet He possessed a reserved dignity that did not encourage undue familiarity.” (EGW, Ms132-1902.13)

“Selfishness is the strongest and most general of human impulses, the struggle of the soul between sympathy and covetousness is an unequal contest; for while selfishness is the strongest passion, love and benevolence are too often the weakest, and as a rule the evil gains the victory. Therefore in our labors

and gifts for God's cause, it is unsafe to be controlled by feeling or impulse. To give or to labor when our sympathies are moved, and to withhold our gifts or service when the emotions are not stirred, is an unwise and dangerous course. If we are controlled by impulse or mere human sympathy, then a few instances where our efforts for others are repaid with ingratitude, or where our gifts are abused or squandered, will be sufficient to freeze up the springs of beneficence." (RH December 7, 1886, par. 5)

Ellen White warns of the tendency of a man to rely on others who will think for him:

"Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will." (EGW, GC 595)

Ellen White rebukes the confession of secret sins to another person which is one of the fundamental delusions of the Spiritual Formation as well as the popular program of 12 steps:

"I have been shown that many, many confessions should never be spoken in the hearing of mortals; for the result is that which the limited judgment of finite beings does not anticipate. Seeds of evil are scattered in the minds and hearts of those who hear, and when they are under temptation, these seeds will spring up and bear fruit, and the same sad experience will be repeated. For, think the tempted ones, these sins cannot be so very grievous; for did not those who have made confession, Christians of long standing, do these very things? Thus the open confession in the church of these secret sins will prove a savor of death rather than of life. ... I hope that none will obtain the idea that they are earning the favor of God by confession of sins or that there is special virtue in confessing to human beings. ... Confess your secret sins alone before your God. ... Your fellow men cannot absolve you from sin or cleanse you

from iniquity. Jesus is the only One who can give you peace.” (EGW, T5 647-649, 1889)

“Every one needs a practical experience in trusting God for himself. Let no man become your confessor; open the heart to God; tell Him every secret of the soul. Bring to Him your difficulties, small and great, and He will show you a way out of them all. He alone can know how to give the very help you need.” (EGW, GW 418.3)

“Sometimes we pour our troubles into human ears, tell our afflictions to those who cannot help us, and neglect to confide all to Jesus, who is able to change the sorrowful way to paths of joy and peace.” (ST, Mar 17, 1887. HC 97.)

Ellen White warns of the abuse of music:

“Those things which have been in the past will be in the future. Satan will make music a snare by the way in which it is conducted. God calls upon His people, who have the light before them in the Word and in the Testimonies, to read and consider, and to take heed. Clear and definite instruction has been given in order that all may understand. But the itching desire to originate something new results in strange doctrines, and largely destroys the influence of those who would be a power for good if they held firm the beginning of their confidence in the truth the Lord had given them.” (EGW, 2SM 38.1)

“David’s dancing in reverent joy before God has been cited by pleasure lovers in justification of the fashionable modern dance, but there is no ground for such an argument. ... The music and dancing in joyful praise to God at the removal of the ark had not the faintest resemblance to the dissipation of modern dancing. The one tended to the remembrance of God and exalted His holy name. The other is a device of Satan to cause men to forget God and to dishonor Him.” (EGW, PP 707.2)

“Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted

to make right decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit never reveals itself in such methods, in such a bedlam of noise. This is an invention of Satan to cover up his ingenious methods for making of none effect the pure, sincere, elevating, ennobling, sanctifying truth for this time. Better never have the worship of God blended with music than to use musical instruments to do the work which last January was represented to me would be brought into our camp meetings. The truth for this time needs nothing of this kind in its work of converting souls. A bedlam of noise shocks the senses and perverts that which, if conducted aright, might be a blessing. The powers of satanic agencies blend with the din and noise to have a carnival, and this is termed the Holy Spirit's working." (EGW, Lt132-1900)

Ellen White warns of the temptation to seek evidence of a communion with God in dwelling upon ourselves and our feelings:

"Impressions and feelings are no sure evidence that a person is led by the Lord. Satan will, if he is unsuspected, give feelings and impressions." (EGW, NL 53.1)

"Many precious souls, earnestly desiring to be Christians, are yet stumbling in darkness, waiting for their feelings to be powerfully exercised. They look for a special change to take place in their feelings. They expect some irresistible force, over which they have no control, to overpower them. They overlook the fact that the believer in Christ is to work out his salvation with fear and trembling." (EGW, Ms55-1910)

"Those who take pains to call attention to their good works, constantly talking of their sinless state and endeavoring to make their religious attainments prominent, are only deceiving their own souls by so doing. A healthy man, who is able to attend to the vocations of life and who goes forth day after day to his labor with buoyant spirits and with a healthy current of blood flowing through his veins, does not call the attention of every one he meets to his soundness of body. Health and

vigor are the natural conditions of his life, and therefore he is scarcely conscious that he is in the enjoyment of so rich a boon.

Thus it is with the truly righteous man. He is unconscious of his goodness and piety. Religious principle has become the spring of his life and conduct, and it is just as natural for him to bear the fruits of the Spirit as for the fig tree to bear figs or for the rosebush to yield roses. His nature is so thoroughly imbued with love for God and his fellow men that he works the works of Christ with a willing heart.” (EGW, SL 12-13)

Ellen White warns of the dangers of contemporary satanic miracles:

“I was shown that by the rapping and mesmerism these modern magicians would yet account for all the miracles wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ, and that many would believe that all the mighty works of the Son of God when on earth were accomplished by this same power.” (EGW, EW 86, 1850)

“Many will be ensnared through the belief that spiritualism is a merely human imposture; when brought face to face with manifestations which they cannot but regard as supernatural, they will be deceived, and will be led to accept them as the great power of God. ... Men are deceived by the miracles which Satan’s agents have power to do, not which they pretend to do.” (EGW, GC 553)

“Men under the influence of evil spirits will work miracles. They will make people sick by casting their spell upon them, and will then remove the spell, leading others to say that those who were sick have been miraculously healed. This Satan has done again and again.” (EGW, 2SM 53, 1903)

“Satan will not only appear as a human being, but he will personate Jesus Christ; and the world that has rejected the truth will receive him as the Lord of lords and King of kings.” (EGW, 5BC 1105.8)

“Satan is striving to gain every advantage.... Disguised as an angel of light, he will walk the earth as a wonder-worker. In beautiful language he will present lofty sentiments; good words will be spoken by him and good deeds performed. Christ will be personified. But on one point there will be a marked distinction—Satan will turn the people from the law of God. Notwithstanding this, so well will he counterfeit righteousness that, if it were possible, he would deceive the very elect. Crowned heads, presidents, rulers in high places, will bow to his false theories.” (EGW, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 471, 472, 1897)

“If you indulge stubbornness of heart, and through pride and self-righteousness do not confess your faults, you will be left subject to Satan’s temptations. If when the Lord reveals your errors you do not repent or make confession, his providence will bring you over the ground again and again. You will be left to make mistakes of a similar character, you will continue to lack wisdom, and will call sin righteousness, and righteousness sin. The multitude of deceptions that will prevail in these last days will encircle you, and you will change leaders, and not know that you have done so.” (EGW RH 16.12.1890)

Ellen White rebukes preachers who cover up the problems, and believers who are cowards to rise against delusions (Omega of Apostasy, Spiritual Formation...) that come from the ministers on the responsible positions:

“The Lord’s messengers should not complain that their efforts are without fruit until they repent of their own love of approbation and their desire to please men, which leads them to suppress truth. Those ministers who are men pleasers, who cry, Peace, peace, when God has not spoken peace, might well humble their hearts before God, asking pardon for their insincerity and their lack of moral courage. It is not from love for their neighbor that they smooth down the message entrusted to them, but because they are self-indulgent and ease-loving. True love seeks first the honor of God and the salvation of

souls. Those who have this love will not evade the truth to save themselves from the unpleasant results of plain speaking. When souls are in peril, God's ministers will not consider self, but will speak the word given them to speak, refusing to excuse or palliate evil." (EGW, PK 141)

"If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God." (EGW, 3T 280)

"And when men standing in the position of leaders and teachers work under the power of spiritualistic ideas and sophistries, shall we keep silent, for fear of injuring their influence, while souls are being beguiled? Satan will use every advantage that he can obtain to cause souls to become beclouded and perplexed in regard to the work of the church, in regard to the Word of God, and in regard to the words of warning which He has given through the testimonies of His Spirit to guard His little flock from the subtleties of the enemy." (EGW, Manuscript 72, 1904)

"For years our physicians have been trained to think that they must not give expression to sentiments that differ from those of their chief. O that they had broken the yoke! O that they had called sin by its right name! Then they would not be regarded in the heavenly courts as men who, though bearing weighty responsibilities, have failed of speaking the truth in reproof of that which has been in disobedience to God's Word. Physicians, have you been doing the Master's business in listening to fanciful and spiritualistic interpretations of the Scriptures, interpretations which undermine the foundations of our faith, and holding your peace? God says, "Neither will I be with you any more, unless you awake, and vindicate your Redeemer." My message to you is: No longer consent to listen without protest to the perversion of truth. Unmask the pretentious sophistries which, if received, will lead ministers and physicians

and medical missionary workers to ignore the truth. Every one is now to stand on his guard. ... Our physicians have lost a great deal out of their lives because they have seen wrong transactions and heard wrong words spoken, and seen wrong principles followed, and have not spoken in reproof, for fear that they would be repulsed. I call upon those who have been connected with these binding influences to break the yoke to which they have long submitted, and stand as free men in Christ.” (EGW, 1SM 196-197)

“The active virtues must be cultivated as well as the passive. The Christian, while he is ever ready to give the soft answer that turneth away wrath, must possess the courage of a hero to resist evil.” (EGW, CEv 55.1)

“Those who have too little courage to reprove wrong, or who through indolence or lack of interest make no earnest effort to purify the family or the church of God, are held accountable for the evil that may result from their neglect of duty. We are just as responsible for evils that we might have checked in others by exercise of parental or pastoral authority as if the acts had been our own.” (EGW, Patriarchs and Prophets, 578)

If the believers of the church do not oppose ministers in responsible church positions who preach delusions, God will allow persecution as a tool to remove them, but at that time the church will have to perform God’s work in much more difficult conditions:

“Unless the church, which is now being leavened with her own backsliding, shall repent and be converted, she will eat of the fruit of her own doing, until she shall abhor herself. When she resists the evil and chooses the good, when she seeks God with all humility and reaches her high calling in Christ, standing on the platform of eternal truth and by faith laying hold upon the attainments prepared for her, she will be healed.” (EGW, 8T 251)

“The work which the church has failed to do in a time of peace and prosperity she will have to do in a terrible crisis under most discouraging, forbidding circumstances. The warnings that worldly conformity has silenced or withheld must be given under the fiercest opposition from enemies of the faith. And at that time the superficial, conservative class, whose influence has steadily retarded the progress of the work, will renounce the faith and take their stand with its avowed enemies, toward whom their sympathies have long been tending. These apostates will then manifest the most bitter enmity, doing all in their power to oppress and malign their former brethren and to excite indignation against them.” (EGW, 5T 463)

“Those who stand in defense of the honor of God and maintain the purity of truth at any cost will have manifold trials, as did our Saviour in the wilderness of temptation. While those who have yielding temperaments, who have not courage to condemn wrong, but keep silent when their influence is needed to stand in defense of the right against any pressure, may avoid many heartaches and escape many perplexities, they will also lose a very rich reward, if not their own souls. Those who are in harmony with God, and who through faith in Him receive strength to resist wrong and stand in defense of the right, will always have severe conflicts and will frequently have to stand almost alone. But precious victories will be theirs while they make God their dependence. His grace will be their strength.” (EGW, 3T 302)

On the basis of these small excerpts from the abundant work of Ellen White, we can responsibly claim that they represent clearer revelation of truth for our time than that revelation which gives us Holy Scripture itself for our time.

God has promised us special wisdom in conflict with the special delusions of God's enemies:

“For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.” (Luke 21:15)

“When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.” (Matthew 10:19-20)

But that doesn't mean that the principle of Sola Scriptura is no longer valid. The truth can not be contradictory to itself. Compliance of the Spirit of prophecy with the Holy Scripture is the test of authenticity of the Spirit of prophecy, while thanks to the Spirit of prophecy itself truths of the Holy Scripture shine even more clearly through their deeply explained meaning.

Certainly, the conscientious persons, who recognize themselves in mentioned quotes of Ellen White, would be intrigued to thoroughly review their spiritual experience in the light by which God illuminated them. A conscientious person will, by fasting and prayer, cry out to God for wisdom to understand the difference between right and false spiritual experience. But George Knight's views of Ellen White could only discourage her:

“Whenever people regard her writings as having more authority than the Bible, or whenever people consistently spend more time with Ellen White's writings than they do with Scripture, they are in effect using her writings to lead them away from the Bible.” (George R. Knight, *Reading Ellen White: How to understand and apply her writings*, 17)

Historian George Knight attempts to discredit the light that God gives through Ellen White, in a way that any reference to Ellen White regarding the terms that in the Scriptures are not clearly explained, he presents as placing Ellen White above the Holy Scriptures. Let's see how Knight devalues the need for Ellen White's work in his explanation of how to read Ellen White:

“1. Focus on the central issues. A person can read Ellen White's writings in at least two ways. One is to look for her central themes; the other is to search for those things that are new and different. The first way leads toward an accurate understanding, while the second leads toward distortion of the

author's meaning and often toward extremes that Ellen White detested.” (George R. Knight, Reading Ellen White in the 21st Century, Oct 01, 2015)

Firstly, inspired writings are not read in order to seek in them central themes or new themes, but to know God and find the right answer to the needs of which a person is aware. Secondly, the opposite category from the central theme is a side theme, and not new and different. The central theme of certain text of Ellen White could be a theme that is new and different. In fact, the Spirit of prophecy is given for those new and different topics, which had not previously been answered through the Bible, because they did not exist. Point 5 just explains the reasons why we need to deal with new and different topics: “5. *Take time and place into consideration. Because of change across time and space, it is important to understand the historical context of many of Ellen White's counsels.*” (George R. Knight, Reading Ellen White in the 21st Century, Oct 01, 2015) Today's temptations are by no means the same as two thousand years ago and that is why we need to deal with new and different topics. Then, the claim that the search for a central theme leads to an accurate understanding is not correct. A person can deal with the central theme and be misunderstood. Accurate understanding is conditioned by honesty toward truth, and it involves struggling with ourselves, against the source of our own subjectivity, which is in our unconquered weaknesses of character. If we do not conquer them, it will be hard to avoid deceit, for it is written:

“For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.” (John 3:20)

“Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12)

According to George Knight, the writings of Ellen White are not needed at all because the Bible is sufficient:

“We do well to be cautious about trying to use Ellen White to emphasize teachings not plainly taught in Scripture. Also we need to remember that everything necessary’ for salvation already appears in the Bible.” (George R. Knight, Reading Ellen White: How to understand and apply her writings, 25)

Thus all those truths that we need in order to unmask the abuse of feelings and various other delusions of our time, all these truths that God has given us through Ellen White, George Knight proclaims irrelevant truths, by the fact that they are not clearly explained in the Bible. But it is the Spirit of prophecy that is given to us so that these truths become clear to us, and that we would be saved by them from severe temptations of the last days. Ellen White, herself, warns:

“The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. ... Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God’s remnant people in the true testimony.” (EGW, Letter 12, 1890)

“There will be a hatred kindled against the testimonies which is satanic. The workings of Satan will be to unsettle the faith of the churches in them, for this reason: Satan cannot have so clear a track to bring in his deceptions and bind up souls in his delusions if the warnings and reproofs and counsels of the Spirit of God are heeded.” (EGW, Letter 40, 1890)

“By many, the words which the Lord sent will be rejected, and the words that man may speak will be received as light and truth. Human wisdom will lead away from self-denial, from consecration, and will devise many things that tend to make of no effect God’s messages. We cannot with any safety rely upon men who are not in close connection with God. They accept the opinions of men, but cannot discern the voice of the true Shepherd, and their influence will lead many astray,

though evidence is piled upon evidence before their eyes, testifying to the truth that God's people should have for this time." (EGW, Letter 1f, 1890)

For this time we are warned through the Scripture itself:

"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." (Matthew 24:21-24)

In order to be able to withstand in conflict with the great delusions, we need a great light that has been promised to us:

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit." (Joel 2:28-29)

Nowhere under the sun was given so great a light adequate to temptations and deceptions of the last days as through the work of Ellen White, and so we should be very grateful to God.

IS THERE ANY SENSE EVER TO REFER TO ELLEN WHITE AS AN AUTHORITY?

Referring to compliance with the Scriptures makes sense only for those people who declaratively claim that in the Holy Scriptures they recognized the truth. This comparing with the Scriptures should make them reexamine the meaning and correctness of their own beliefs, because the new light can never come into conflict with the light already revealed, because the truth can not be self-contradictory to itself.

If we are talking to an atheist, it is meaningless to refer to the Bible as authority because he does not believe in this authority,

but it makes sense, on the basis of the meaning of the Bible, to help him to gain trust in God and the Holy Scriptures as His revelation. If we are talking with the Jew, there is no point in referring to the authority of the New Testament, because it is not authority to him, but it makes sense to show him, by a rational explanation of the meaning of the New Testament, that it is in accordance with the Old Testament, as the authority and criterion of truth.

If we speak to a Christian who is not Adventist, there is no point in referring to Ellen White (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol.1, 119-120), because he does not consider her as authority, but it makes sense, by explanation of the meaning of Ellen White's work, to point out to her inspiration and compliance with the Scriptures.

If we, however, talk to an Adventist who recognized in the works of Ellen White the inspired author, then there is no point in referring to our own authority and claiming that we are right because we think that we are right, because we are not his authority. But it makes sense, by a rational explanation of our understanding, to show him that our understanding is in line with the writings of Ellen White, which he has already recognized to be right and inspired by God.

Referring to authority is, as we see, a matter of convention.

But that in itself is not a guarantee of a proper understanding of authority. Jews refer to the Old Testament, but by rejection of the New Testament, they reveal that the Old Testament they do not understand correctly. Adventists refer to the whole Bible, but if they reject the writings of Ellen White, they discover that they are far from the correct understanding of the Scriptures.

There are Adventists who refer to the writings of Ellen White, but at the same time they are delighted with the delusions of the *Spiritual Formation* or the books of George Knight, which is proof that the writings of Ellen White they do not understand correctly.

HOW TO READ GEORGE KNIGHT?

“Reading Ellen White: How To Understand And Apply Her Writings” is the name of George Knight’s book.

And how we would answer the question - How to read George Knight?

He should be read and understood as a kind of skeptic, who would, if born in the time of Jesus Christ, consider that Jesus and the apostles didn’t initiate anything, but only confirmed what was written in the time of Moses, and that the epistles and the Gospels should not be taken for the criterion of truth and placed in the same ranking with the Old Testament, because the apostles themselves referred to the Old Testament (see Acts 17:11) in an effort to test and prove the righteousness of their beliefs.

George Knight should be read and understood as a skeptic who would, if born in the time of Moses, advocate that the Ten Commandments are the set of transcripts from the Code of Hammurabi and other traditions of that age, and that eventually he should be understood as a skeptic who, despite he doubts religious doctrine, nevertheless decides to join the Jews or to become a Christian because of his strong need for identity.

George Knight should be read and understood as a Trojan horse, who, because of the need for identity, occupied a high position in God’s people, which gave him freedom to carry out his skepticism within the God’s people, doing what no other skeptic achieved until now.

So, how should Knight be read? It shouldn’t be read at all!

IS DOUBTFULNESS VIRTUE OR DEFECT?

“He will bring in spurious visions, to mislead and mingle the false with the true, and so disgust people that they will regard everything that bears the name of visions, as a species of fanaticism; but honest souls, by contrasting false and true, will be enabled to distinguish between them.

When the Testimonies, which were once believed, are doubted and given up, Satan knows the deceived ones will not stop at this; and he redoubles his efforts till he launches them into open rebellion, which becomes incurable and ends in destruction.” (EGW, FLB 296)

Perhaps some wouldn't agree with the statement that constant questioning, mentioned by Ellen White in the following text, can have bad consequences:

“I know your danger. If you lose confidence in the testimonies you will drift away from Bible truth. I have been fearful that many would take a questioning, doubting position, and in my distress for your souls I would warn you. How many will heed the warning?” (EGW, 5T 98.2)

The fact is that many do not realize that doubtfulness is a sin, so they do not resist the temptation of doubtfulness, but they try to liberate themselves from doubt by the constant searching for new evidence. But even though we should be curious, and even though it is our responsibility to check the correctness of our belief, the motive of our curiosity should be love of truth, and not fear of error. Just as it is a sin if we do good to other people out of fear rather than from love, so is a sin if we are curious out of the fear of error, instead of the love of truth. It is not the same to be truth-loving and error-scared (suspicious). If suspicion overcomes us, then we will doubt what is clear just because it is clear, while we will accept for the truth something that is unclear because it provokes and satisfies our suspicion. Have not we already noticed that many who started with a suspicion toward Ellen White or the Trinity soon ended with a suspicion toward the Holy Scripture itself and with belief in the Earth as a flat plate?! **Therefore, we are not liberated from suspicion by the greater knowledge of the truth, but by the conversion of the heart, because suspicion is a sin, and the uncertainty of truth is only a cause for manifestation of the sin of suspicion.**

If we, under the influence of George Knight, fell into the sin of doubtfulness, we can overcome this temptation if we call sin

by its right name and confess that we have sinned because we doubted that God leads the history of His people. Perhaps, by dealing with our own identity, instead with the Lord, we lost the understanding of the meaning of our truth. Unfortunately, people who, like George Knight, do not analyze the meaning of God's message and its adequacy to the need of life, do not have an anchor which will preserve them in Adventism. Whoever the identity of his belief is founding on the accuracy of the message, and not on the inspiration of the sense (therefore, recognizing that belief is a response to the real need of the world and the church) will find innumerable causes to reject his Adventist identity. Above all, accuracy can always be suspected because it contains conditions that are unverifiable. We do not know if some of Ellen White's scripts were properly translated or not. Maybe we do not have the power to check it easily. We do not even know if the original is authentic or revised. It's more difficult to check. We do not even know whether the writing itself was desecrated by the human factor or not. These questions can also be reoriented even to the Scripture, so we can ask ourselves whether the translations of the Bible are correct and whether the oldest preserved copy of the Bible is authentic, and in the end, whether everything that the biblical prophets wrote is deprived of the human factor. There are always reasons for suspicion, and when a man is overcome by suspicion, it is unquenchable. We have not witnessed the writing of Holy Scriptures or the history of their transcriptions and translations until this moment. And finally, if our goal is accuracy, and not inspiration, what will we do when we face the fact that the same historical events in the Holy Scriptures in different books were described with different data? If our goal is accuracy, our consistency in checking will feed our doubtfulness until we lose the identity of a believer who believes in the truthfulness of the Holy Scriptures. But if our goal is the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures or the Spirit of prophecy, or any other spiritual material, there is no need to know the way in which the scripture came to us, nor do we need to have confidence in its preserved

authenticity, nor do we need to trust in the one who brings out the light of truth to us. For us is enough a reasonable analysis of the meaning of the revelation itself. If the meaning of this revelation is the answer to the real temptations that we ourselves, or other people have, we can be sure that the revelation is of God inspired.

Some people say, *“I can not believe Ellen White because I do not know what life she really had and whether she is worthy of trust!”* But we are not responsible to the bearer of the light, but to the meaning of the revealed light. We are not able to objectively determine the actual character of the person who reveals a message to us, but we are able to determine by means of an analysis the meaning of her message whether her message is from God or not. So, we receive the message as given of God, not because we blindly believe the prophet himself who brings the message to us, but because the very content of the message, as an adequate and reasonable respond to the existing temptation, is a proof that it is given of God. Therefore, if we are reprimanded for our sins by the most wicked person in the city, we are responsible before God for the light which illuminated us on the basis of its very sense, no matter whether this light for us came from the mouth of a friend or enemy.

“No matter by whom light is sent, we should open our hearts to receive it with the meekness of Christ. But many do not do this.” (EGW, GW 301, 1915)

Slanders that we are listening are usually proportional to the light that illuminates us, and they give us freedom of choice to reject the light if we are looking for an excuse to reject it. For anyone who presents an unpopular light of truth, Jesus explained that his personality would be the subject of slandering by those who are reprimanded by this truth:

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:11-12)

Even during her lifetime, Ellen White endured suspicions and slanders because of the truth she preached: "Those who have a spirit of opposition to the work that for twenty-six years we have been pressed by the Spirit of God to do, and who would break down our testimony, I saw are not fighting against us, but against God, who has laid upon us the burden of a work that He has not given to others. Those who question and quibble, and think it a virtue to doubt, and who would discourage; those who have been the means of making our work hard and of weakening our faith, hope, and courage have been the ones to surmise evil, to insinuate suspicious charges, and to watch with jealousy for occasion against us. They take it for granted that because we have human weaknesses it is a positive evidence that we are wrong and that they are right. If they can find a semblance of anything that they can use to injure us they do it with a spirit of triumph and are ready to denounce our work of reproofing wrong and condemning sin as a harsh, dictatorial spirit. As my husband has stood by my side to sustain me in my work and has borne a plain testimony in unison with the work of the Spirit of God, many have felt that it was he personally who was injuring them, when it was the Lord who laid upon him the burden and who was, through His servant, reproofing them and seeking to bring them where they would repent of their wrongs and have the favor of God. Those whom God has chosen for an important work have ever been received with distrust and suspicion." (EGW, 3T 260-362) As Ellen White was doubted during her life, so the fight against her work continued even after her death. Fight that leads George Knight against her is just one more subtle form of struggle against the light that calls him on his own reform.

In the case of rejection of the message that rebukes sin, the first thing which is rejected is the inspired meaning of the message, while often the message is still accepted by the letter. However, when its meaning becomes too clear and unambiguous, a person has a need to openly reject the message because the letter of the message is also burdensome to her. Since it is impossible

to dispute the meaning of God's message with the arguments of common sense, a person often tries to come down on the personality of the message-bearer or the accuracy of the message itself. When Adventists preached that Jesus would come on a certain date, attacked was the inaccuracy of their interpretation and the principle of determining the date of the Second Coming of Christ, but the real background of the critique was the fight against rebuke for their favorite attitude: "*My master is delayed.*" (Matthew 24:48) Often, critics of the Scriptures present a critique of the unscientific claims of the Scriptures, which were in fact an integral part of the beliefs of people of ancient times, but this didn't diminish the inspiration of the messages of the Holy Scriptures. The inspiration of the message is in the sense of the message, most often in its rebuke against sin, and the fact that the message of the prophet can be imbued with the conviction that the Sun turns around the Earth, and not the Earth around the Sun, does not in any way diminish the inspired sense of the message. If God occasionally intervened and corrected such mistakes, He would draw attention away from the healing sense of the message to irrelevant details, and the prejudices of the people to the revealed scientific facts would close the door of their hearts for accepting the spiritual sense of the message itself.

A person who doesn't distinguish the accuracy from inspiration will be inclined to manifest, through her alleged truth-love, the following understanding: "*I will be faithful to You, Lord, only if You force me with such clear evidence that I will not be able to deny it in any way!*" This person will be devoted to God only if she is forced. But a person who seeks inspiration instead of accuracy, she only seeks evidence that God is love and that God will give her the hand of mercy in her temptation. She just has to stop to hold firmly closed eyes before the reprimands for sin, and the awareness of God's love will become for her a saving truth. By accepting God's merciful hand, she has all the treasures of heavenly wisdom open in front of her, as a response to the needs of her own life and her sphere of influence.

IMPLICATION OF A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY IS APOSTASY FROM ADVENTIST IDENTITY

Where George Knight had stopped, there others continued and came to reject Ellen White and our fundamental truths. Simply stated, George Knight's delusions result in a set of natural implications that lead into spiritual apostasy, which can be documented by examples of several theologians who otherwise promote the delusions of Spiritual Formation. We will start from the very need for identity that has a foothold in popular psychology where it is classified into fundamental human needs. An idea that these fundamental human needs have to be satisfied before a man turns to spiritual needs is also represented by several Adventist psychiatrists, advocates of the Spiritual Formation. Unrenewed needs of the fallen human nature, they are trying to present as real human needs. By satisfying a man's need for feeling of his own self-worth and greatness, they do not realize that they merely nourish the great vain Ego. Thus they make a person burdened, oversensitive and easily insulted. With George Knight's story about the need for identity, such delusions result in catastrophic consequences.

A professor at one of our Adventist Theological Seminary, in his lecture entitled "The Present Truth " continues to think where George Knight has stopped, and claims that since the need for identity is a basic human need, we must reject the concept of "Great Controversy" because we can not satisfy the need for identity and for others' approval, if we are in the conflict with the Catholics. Following George Knight's logic of the need for identity, this professor advocates that our basic Adventist truths have emerged as the result of complexes of the pioneers of the Advent movement who felt rejected by Jesus because He did not come in 1844:

"Now, how did they survive, how they survived this crash, how their hope came back? So the three doctrines that gave them hope were just the doctrines of the judgment (that is, the investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary), the doctri-

ne about the law (therefore, that they have no more nine, but plus one, the Saturday, the tenth commandment) and the doctrine about conditional immortality. Around these three doctrines, a new identity has developed, and they have caught up for these three doctrines. The strawberries for the straw are much more relaxed. These three doctrines were a cure for the soul to them. To them. The rescue belt. The water of the newbirth, which, to some extent, has washed away the stigma that remained on them after October 22, 1844.” (M. Lukic, Present Truth, October 21, 2017)

This professor of Theology interprets the behavior of Adventists at the time of disappointment as the behavior of unconverted people. His role model is George Knight, who interprets in the same carnal mode the experience of God’s people at the time of the great disappointment in 1844:

“With expectation of the Second Advent at an all-time high, October 22, 1844, was the climax of Millerism. But Jesus didn’t come. The day arrived and went, thus encouraging the scoffers and fearful, but leaving the Millerites in total disarray. Their specific date and their unbounded confidence in that date served to heighten their disappointment. ... It was bad enough that the believers had been disappointed, but the added burden of facing a jeering world complicated their lives in late October. ... “Disorientation” and “disarray” are two words that help us capture the mood and structure of Millerite Adventism after October 22, 1844. ... The scattering time had arrived. Millerism in the period after October 1844 found itself in a state of crisis. The months and years after October 1844 found the Adventists in a search for identity, a task they had never thought they would have to undertake, and one for which, in many ways, they were ill-equipped. ... The primary task for the various Millerites in late 1844 and throughout 1845 was to find meaning, to discover what it meant to be an Adventist.” (George R. Knight, A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Beliefs, 53-55)

However, the faithful of God did not lose their faith in Christ that they would have a need for identity, but they even spiritually built themselves up through disappointment when Jesus did not come to the predicted dates:

“It was a bitter disappointment that fell upon the little flock whose faith had been so strong and whose hope had been so high. But we were surprised that we felt so free in the Lord and were so strongly sustained by His strength and grace. ... We were disappointed, but not disheartened. We resolved to submit patiently to the process of purifying that God deemed needful for us, and to wait with patient hope for the Saviour to redeem His tried and faithful ones.” (EGW, 1T 55-56)

In the same lecture, our professor of theology claims that the truth about judgment is scaring people, and that the truth about law does not contribute to healing and salvation, and that, instead of the truth about law, we need to preach the truth about God’s love - *“that God unconditionally loves us”* and the truth that *“we will be justified without the deeds of the law”* and the truth *“about the future glory of the kingdom, which God prepares for those who have surrendered to him.”* He complains because our belief is based not on *“these three truths which heal the soul, but on the truth about the judgment, the truth about the law, and the truth about conditional immortality. These are the three truths ... which have nothing to do with these first three. These are truths that do not heal the soul. They do not lead to new birth, and if we place them in the place of those three central ones, the result will be fear of the judgment.” (M. Lukic, Present Truth, October 21, 2017)*

To those claims I answered that putting the focus on the preaching of love to the world that lives in lawlessness would have the same consequences as if the prophet Jonah instead of the message **“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (Jonah 3: 3)** preached the message *“God loves you! Salvation is by faith without the deed of law!”*.

In that case, none of them would repent of their iniquities. Even today, this same sermon in this century of lawlessness would only represent a calming of conscience of lawless people, which in the revelations of God's love requires the proof of God's approval, and not the strength of repentance.

Such message of "love" is already preached by all apostate churches, and if we would repeat this, our message would not have more elevated function than the one that it has in them, which is an excuse for sin.

When we tell people from the world that God is love, we are not telling them anything new that they have not heard from traditional Christians. Don't we realize that they interpret this notion of love in a completely distorted way, as if love is emotion and tool of pleasure?!

They interpret the notion of love most often in the same way as Ellen White described the notion of love interpreted by the advocates of modern delusion:

"But the Bible is interpreted in a manner that is pleasing to the unrenewed heart, while its solemn and vital truths are made of no effect. Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism making little distinction between good and evil. God's justice, his denunciations of sin, the requirements of his holy law, are all kept out of sight. The people are taught to regard the decalogue as a dead letter." (EGW, GC 558)

It is the truth about the judgment and the law, when placed in the forefront of our message, the one that defines the concept of love in the right way - that it is not in satisfying of our sinful desires, but in the unburdening of them and enabling a man to live for other people. It is easy to understand that someone loves you if he does not see you as a transgressor of the law. Such an understanding of love also have the unconverted among themselves. Only in the context of the law, the concept of God's love receives a sublime meaning that leads to repentance.

Claim that the truth about the judgment and the law is not conducive to healing is wrong, because without awareness of the sinfulness we are not aware of the need for heart reform and reconciliation with God. And awareness of sinfulness comes through the requirements of the law: "Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.'" (Romans 7: 7) The law is given to us "in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure." (Romans 7:13). That is why the law is necessary for us that by keeping us aware of sinfulness, it keeps us "glued" to Jesus.

Ellen White explained the role of the law with the following words:

"The law and the gospel, revealed in the Word, are to be preached to the people; for the law and the gospel, blended, will convict of sin. God's law, while condemning sin, points to the gospel, revealing Jesus Christ, in whom "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Col.2:9)." (EGW, Manuscript 21, 1891.)

"After a good work has been done, the ones who have been awakened to a sense of sin should be taught how to take hold of the arm of the Lord." (EGW, Manuscript 83, 1901)

Why the representatives of the Spiritual Formation have a disdainful attitude towards the law? Because they, due to reliance on their unrenewed nature instead of on God, experience it as a burden of slavery, and because of the unreconciliation with God they feel it also as a shadow of judgment that awaits them.

Fear of the truth about judgment is the fear of an unclean conscience. This fear is not proof that the message is incorrect, but that the people are still unrepentant for their sins. Unrepentance results in unclean conscience, because of which many are afraid of God and the law, because they subconsciously remind them of the judgment, which, because of their unrepentance, really awaits them. But rather than repent of their iniquity and so fulfill

the condition of justification by Christ's merits, some of them try to present that the fear of God is the result of traumas in childhood experienced by their strict parents, and not the result of sin that they kept in their hearts. In order to avoid the fear of unclean conscience, they distort the idea of God by depriving it of all righteousness and representing His love as a kind of sentiment that does not distinguish good from evil. They form such a distorted notion of God that through it the Holy Spirit can not rebuke them for the sins of the heart and make them aware of the need for their own reform.

Many people are bothered with the law because they are self-centered, not Christ-centered. When one trusts in God, he is, due to his awareness of sin, even more attached to Jesus. But when one relies on himself, he is, due to his awareness of sinfulness, prone to despair. Since he seeks within himself the strength to keep the law, the demands of the law seem to him as a heavy burden, and not an easy yoke as Jesus reveals when he says, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:30) or when the apostle John claims that "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3).

George Knight is controversial in his attitude towards the law. Although declaratively he advocates the correct principles of law, he interprets them very distortedly, so to a person, who is in temptation of lawlessness, he gives an excuse to reject the voice of conscience as a negative and disturbing experience that comes from Satan and calls on hypocrisy.

In the book "The Pharisee's Guide to Perfect Holiness" George Knight claims that Jesus pointed the rich Jewish nobleman, "beyond negative ten (commandments) to the positive law of love". Likewise, in his book, "I Used to Be Perfect," Knight criticized the "negative" approach to the law, out of which follows that God Himself was wrong in giving the commands that begin with negation:

*“The negative approach to religion stems from a negative approach to law. The world has seen too much negative religion. A young pastor once told me that for many people “the major qualification for being a Christian is the ability to say ‘don’t.’” Unfortunately, that caricature is all too true for many people who need to come to grips with a higher standard. It is a relatively simple thing for me to avoid theft, murder, or adultery compared to the unending challenge of caring for all my neighbors as myself. ... Christianity is a positive, not a negative.” (George R. Knight, *I Used to Be Perfect*)*

But actually it is quite the opposite. If we rely on ourselves, it is relatively easy to do good deeds. This is a feature of carnal man that from personal vanity, pride, guilty conscience or selfish sentiment he does good to others. But to keep the commandment “do not covet” by relying on self is impossible, because without God a man can not really conquer sinful desires of his heart, but only fetter them in their manifestation. Even other commandments that forbid adultery, lies and theft, is harder to keep externally than “caring for all my neighbors” in our human strength. But it is completely wrong to raise a question whether it is something difficult or easy from the position of faith in oneself. It is clear to us that Knight addresses those who rely on themselves, and not on God, because he looks through himself and his own experience.

Knight tries to present that we can keep some of God's commandments without God in our hearts. By this he reveals the Pharisaic superficiality in the concept of the law.

It is true that without a communion with God we can not keep a single commandment of God, because the commandments look at the motives of the heart and therefore require the reform of the heart motives to be kept.

Knight claims that the motive of keeping the commandment “*You shall not covet*” should be love, and says, “*Because I love my neighbor, I will not covet my neighbor's car, house, wife, or husband.*” (George R. Knight, *I Used to Be Perfect*) This un-

derstanding is wrong because it separates the law from love. Actually, we can not even have true love until we first conquer the desire. Emotional affection is not a proof that we really love someone. If, due to emotional affection, I bind my desire, I will still keep the desire in my heart. Knight presents that the desire is not bad by itself, but bad is only because it endangers another. From this understanding follows that we should only from consideration for others take care of our behavior, and not to repent of the sinful desires themselves. In such philosophy God is not necessary to us.

If we truly believe in God, we will not say how difficult it is to keep some commandments. We know that it is impossible to keep neither one commandment without God, but as we believe in God we have no excuse for breaking the law. Then we are aware that it is easy to keep the commandments of God, because it is God's work in us, but choice of God always remains more or less hard because our sinful nature opposes to God.

To Knight himself is not clear a division of one's own human responsibility in relation to God's share in the plan of salvation. He criticizes the idea that God himself does all:

"Some Christian writers seem to imply that "Jesus does it all."... The Bible is laced with words and stories that imply human effort." (George R. Knight, I Used to be Perfect)

And he also points out that a man can do nothing without God:

"But neither does the Bible teach the efficacy of human effort separated from God's empowerment. "Apart from me," Christ said, "you can do nothing" (John 15:5)." (George R. Knight, I Used to be Perfect)

However, Knight does not explain whose responsibility it is, what in practice can result in a total change of responsibility. People tend to save themselves from sin by binding their own will in its expression, and the responsibility of the choice of God to surrender to God, waiting for Him to ignite in their hearts an excitement on the basis of which they will decide to live correctly.

The truth is the opposite. We must, without our sinful heart, by our own will, choose God and then, trusting in Him with faith, accept the power of right life. This means that we will keep on ourselves the daily responsibility of choosing God through prayer and studying the Scriptures, which is not always pleasing:

“All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning.” (Psalm 73:13-14)

“Fight the good fight of the faith.” (1 Timothy 6:12)

“It is through the will that sin retains its hold upon us. The surrender of the will is represented as plucking out the eye or cutting off the hand. Often it seems to us that to surrender the will to God is to consent to go through life maimed or crippled. But it is better, says Christ, for self to be maimed, wounded, crippled, if thus you may enter into life. That which you look upon as disaster is the door to highest benefit.” (EGW, MB 61.1)

“The whole heart must be yielded to God, or the change can never be wrought in us by which we are to be restored to His likeness. ... The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness.” (EGW, ST 43)

This responsibility of choice should be 100% ours, and the result of such everyday's choice will be 100% God's share in our keeping the law, as a spontaneous expression of the presence of the Spirit of God within us:

“Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man.” (1 Samuel 10:6)

“I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” (Jeremiah 31:33)

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone from your body and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit in to you and make you conform to my statutes, keep my laws and live by them.” (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

While the Bible presents the division of responsibility according to the principle, “Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.” (Psalm 37:5), at the same time Knight’s explanation hints at a different idea:

“First comes surrender, then comes spirit-empowered action that requires human effort and cooperation. ... In summary, human effort is important and needed. While effort does not lead to salvation, it certainly flows from it.” (George R. Knight, I Used To Be Perfect)

Misunderstanding of the purpose of the law and of the correctness of doctrine of salvation results in misunderstanding of the basic problems of the church. When it comes to the problem of secularization in the church, George Knight does not see the problem at all in the wrong interpretation of the doctrine, in neglected demands of God’s law, but the responsibility for the crisis he transfers to God, to the delay of Jesus’ Second Coming:

“The problem? Jesus hasn’t come! Beyond that, some Adventists have begun to wonder if He ever will. Continuing time has spawned the fruits of secularization, disorientation, and institutionalism in the church. The extension of time has mothered every problem currently faced by Seventh-day Adventists. And yet time goes on and on and on.” (George R. Knight, If I Were the Devil, 9)

Ellen White explains the sources of secularization and the lawlessness of the society of her time as the result of neglecting the demands of God’s law, which can also be related to the explanation of the same evil today in the church itself:

“The apostle gives us the true definition of sin. “Sin is the transgression of the law.” The largest class of Christ’s profe-

ssed ambassadors are blind guides. They lead the people away from the path of safety by representing the requirements and prohibitions of the ancient law of Jehovah as arbitrary and severe. They give the sinner license to overstep the limits of God's law. In this they are like the great adversary of souls, opening before them a life of freedom in violation of God's commandments. With this lawless freedom the basis of moral responsibility is gone.

Those who follow these blind leaders close the avenues of their souls to the reception of truth. They will not allow the truth with its practical bearings to affect their hearts. The largest number brace their souls with prejudice against new truths, and also against the clearest light which shows the correct application of an old truth, the law of God, which is as old as the world.

The intemperate and licentious delight in the oft-repeated assertion that the law of the ten commandments is not binding in this dispensation. Avarice, thefts, perjuries, and crimes of every description are carried on under the cloak of Christianity." (EGW, Con 75)

"In the churches that have departed from truth and righteousness it is being revealed what human nature can do and will do when the love of God is not an abiding principle in the soul. We need not be surprised at anything that may take place now. We need not marvel at any developments of horror.

Those who trample under their unholy feet the law of God have the same spirit as had the men who insulted and betrayed Jesus. Without any compunction of conscience, they will do the deeds of their father, the devil. They will ask the question that came from the traitorous lips of Judas, What will you give me if I betray unto you Jesus the Christ? Even now Christ is being betrayed in the person of His saints." (EGW, 5BC 1106.4)

BACKGROUND OF THE FIGHT FOR ORDINATION OF WOMEN FOR PASTORS

Relativization of the doctrine of the Adventist church, the understanding that the truth is changeable, gave George Knight the indescribable courage to proclaim himself Martin Luther of the Adventist church in purpose to rise against the General Conference, which, on the basis of the majority of delegates, voted further ban of the ordination of women for pastors.

After thousands of years of Biblical and Christian history, appeared the idea that women should share the same responsibilities in the church as men. Equating the positions of both sexes reached its peak in idea and that women by ordination share with men the right to baptize, lead the rite of communion and to take on themselves the function of the church leaders. The church has already surrendered under the pressure that these functions women can perform as an ordained church elders, and attempt to perform this function as pastors was rejected by a will of majority of delegates.

What did it happen, so there emerged a need for the change of the position of a woman in the church?

After 6000 years, has the genetics of the sexes changed?

No, but the world has changed and started with the strong pressure on the church to change its understanding of the differences between the responsibilities that women should or should not take on themselves. The influence of the modern world is contrary to the attitude of the Holy Scriptures. Modern understanding of the difference between male and female is such that, according to it, the Bible advocates gender inequality of the sexes by giving women a different role in family and society.

According to the Scriptures, a woman was created to be an assistant to a man (Genesis 2:18). After falling into sin, the woman is warned that because of her fall, her will should be under the will of the man. In the Bible, we read: "The determination of thy will shall be yielded to thy husband, and, accordingly, he shall rule over thee." (Genesis 3:16). The texts such as "the head

of a wife is her husband” (1 Corinthians 11:3) and the like are only the echo of these words from Genesis 3:16. In spite of remarks on the male roles of women in society, we notice that it is irreplaceable the role of women in raising children:

“A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.” (1 Timothy 2:11-15)

Throughout biblical history, although woman is characterized by different spiritual gifts (from prophesying to preaching), nowhere we will find that she has the function of leader in the church, nor of leading the rite, either in the Old Testament temple or New Testament church.

Thus, the Bible gives different responsibilities to different sexes and therefore, according to modern criteria, the Bible represents “gender inequality”.

This imposes upon us the question, who is right?

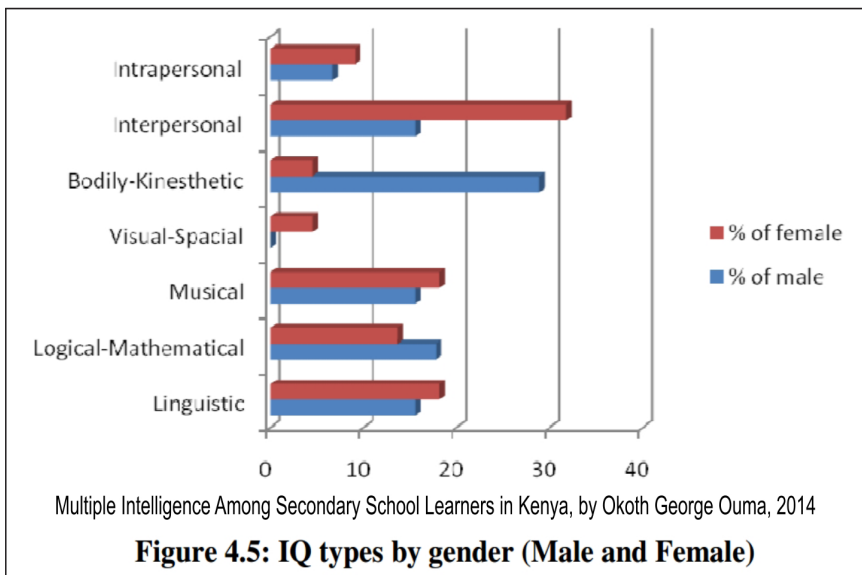
Is this influence of the world on the church good or bad?

Should church sacrifice its thousand years old practice to gain the approval of the world in order to emphasize the more important content of its message than gender roles or whether it should adhere to its Biblical tradition in order to preserve the sharpness of its message directed to the world?

Has the world advanced and has it reached a higher level that requires of the church to renounce its “backward” traditions or the world has experienced decadence and now it makes a negative impact on the church?

In order to answer these questions, we need to reconsider what understanding is right; are the sexes really equal in their abilities or not?

Numerous scientific studies have found that female hormones even during prenatal development, cause death (apoptosis) of the cells of the brain responsible for male intellectual faculties, while testosterone in men destroy those cells of the brain which are responsible for the female intellectual abilities. The result is variously developed different types of intelligence between the different sexes, so women show more developed V factor (ability of using words) and M factor (mechanical memory ability), while men show more developed R factor (ability to discover a rule or principle, better developed ability to understand relations, finding general principles, correctness and rightness from given data) and N factor (ability to do numerical calculations rapidly and accurately). Etc.



In a study titled “Empathy, estradiol and androgen levels in 9-year-old children”, the group of authors discovers how girls with a higher level of male hormone testosterone show lower level of empathy compared to girls with excess estradiol, while boys with higher levels of the female hormone estradiol show greater empathy than boys with excess testosterone levels. In order not to be deconcentrated in his responsibilities with those

responsibilities which primarily correspond to the female sex, a man's emotionality is, therefore, blocked in the development by the male hormone testosterone. While a woman is more endowed with emotional intelligence that reveals her sphere of responsibility and guardianship for the persons with whom she is directly close, a man is more distinguished by abstract intelligence - issues of general significance that make him the source of the safety of his wife and family, and the source of justice in the human community. Therefore, completely purposeful to their place under the sun – to a woman is more important how she feels, and to a man is more important whether that what he is doing is valuable, powerful, meaningful and just. The capabilities of male and female sex are mutually complementary fulfilling each other. In the same stressful situation, a woman will rather react with emotion of fear and defensively (to preserve children), while combativeness she will leave to a male sex who is for the aggressive defense of family and community enabled by his psychological and physical features.

As we see, both scientific research and common sense, indisputably prove that the Bible as well as the two thousand years of tradition of the Christian church, on this issue are right. Scientific findings confirm also Ellen White's suggestion on the women's ordination, but only for their female functions of care for people with whom they are in direct contact:

“Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church.” (EGW, RH, July 9, 1895)

If so, the question arises - how is it possible that such understanding is being promoted, in spite of the scientific facts, that the traditional differences between the sexes in their position in the family and in society are the expression of gender inequality?

“Cultural and traditional stereotypes about the position of the sexes in the family are also an example of visible inequality. Men were viewed as smarter and more sensible than women who are emotional, so they had the main word in the family. ... Men have traditionally been viewed as the main worker in the home, so jobs held by men have been historically economically valued and occupations predominated by men continue to be economically valued and earn higher wages.” (Wikipedia, Massey, Douglas. “Categorically Unequal: The American Stratification System.” NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007.)

Such blindness before scientific facts is possible only from strong ideological motives, and they are the consequence of the degradation of the modern man and the distortion of his sexual functions. In the contemporary spiritual and moral decadence of man, every sexual role is crippled, because the abuse of ability for satisfaction (which is the root of sexual immaturity) leads to the loss of function because of which this ability exists, so this is being revealed in the function of sexual abilities. The emotion that should be the ability of expressing love, becomes a source of satisfaction, so people prefer the emotions that a loved one is causing to them rather than her personality. A woman renounces her female responsibilities (child-raising and serving her husband), since this humiliates her arrogance. She becomes arrogant to admit her dependence on a man in those spheres in which it is normal to build a complementary relationship with a man. That is why numerous expressions of tenderness, which were quite common in Western culture at the time of its greatest prosperity, disturb her, as she perceives them as a humiliation of her own arrogance. And a man renounces his male agility, fight for social justice and service to society and humanity, and becomes a coward and henpecked. He shifts his own responsibilities

to the state, which explains why the level of testosterone in men from year to year is more and more decreasing. In such situation, both parents lose the motive of caring for their children, because the children disturb them in hedonism. In the end a man loses the meaning of life, because the only true meaning of life which imbues relations and living and non-living matter, is that it exists for the sake of other and serves the other.

On this decadent spirit of the modern man, who certainly deserves a clear reprimand of Elijah of the modern era (SDA church), writes Per Bylund, on the example of moral decadence of Swedes:

“This degenerated morality and lack of understanding for the real and natural order of things is also evident in areas requiring personal responsibility and respect for fellow men and women. The elderly are now treated as ballast rather than human beings and relatives. The younger generations feel they have a “right” to not take responsibility for their parents and grandparents, and therefore demand the state relieve them of this burden. ... The same goes for the youngest who are also delivered to the state for public care rather than being brought up and educated by their parents. ... The result of this degenerated morality on a social or societal level is a disaster economically, socially, psychologically, and philosophically.” (Per Bylund, *How the Welfare State Corrupted Sweden*)

In such a decadent state, a woman who serves a man and who admits her dependence on a man represents a reproach to the impure conscience of most women who in their pride have renounced these functions. Unclean conscience is the driving force that stands behind the persecution of anyone who upsets it. Men and women of unclean conscience can be very aggressive and violent towards the one who is the rebuke for their conscience. Let us remember the cause why Cain killed Abel:

“And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous. Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.” (1 John 3:12-13)

Jesus Christ gave us a simple test of our interpretation of the Gospel:

“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.” (Luke 6:26)

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” (John 15:18-19)

The world naturally cherishes the spirit of persecution toward those who by rightly position of both sexes in the family and the church represent a reproach for their deviation.

Should we make a compromise with the world in order to please the consciences of the deviated and rebuked? Or should it be with reasonable arguments and righteous life to stand up in defense of the proper function of both sexes?

Obviously, because of our own liberalism and compromise with the world, many of our churches as well as the entire divisions do not have the courage to be the light of the world on this issue. Rather than to oppose evil, they fall under its influence.

What are the implications of giving women in the church those responsibilities that are only suitable for men?

A woman in the function of a leader loses awareness of dependence on the help of a man who is necessary for her due to her neglected role of reason, in relation to the reason of the man. She thus assumes position in which she can hardly be helped with advice, for she is in a position because of which she is not ready to listen. In addition, her natural tendency to timidity can make her a coward when she needs to stand up against injustice, while the liability of personality due to expressed emotionality, can lead her on selfish sentiment and so biased in reasoning and unstable in decision-making.

We live in the society in which the role of reason is suppressed, because reason disturbs unclean conscience. The purpose of reason is the ability to distinguish the good from evil: “To turn

away from evil is understanding.” (Job 28:28) Without the reason, a man can not understand the spirit of the law and repent of the sinful motives of his heart, because without the reason he understands the Gospel according to the letter, not spirit. Because of the lack of understanding of the spirit of law, many repent only for the symptoms of sin in thoughts, feelings, and actions, while at the level of heart motives sin remains. Majority of the modern sermons is devoid of wisdom, because believers do not want to be disturbed and preachers do not want to lose the approval of the believers for presenting a “present truth”. They still present unquestionable biblical truths, but not those truths that are the real cure for human hearts. Perhaps they just make this mistake of which Ellen White warns:

“The feelings and sympathies of the people were stirred; but their consciences were not convicted, their hearts were not broken and humbled before God.” (EGW, 3T 217.4)

Even the role a man who, with his reasonable criticism, is responsible to openly reprimand evil in the church and in the world, is blocked by tabooing of any criticism which is automatically proclaimed as hate speech.

In such society, where even male responsibilities are considered undesirable, how will we ever be able to observe them in women who took on themselves the function of man?! Very hard!

Also, the idea of equalizing a woman with a man by the role she has in leading the ceremony of baptism and communion, diminishes the possibility that the leaders of the ritual, by their very appearance, elevate the thoughts and feelings of the people to God. People fail to see, in their mental representation, Jesus who breaks the bread.

The work of preaching the Gospel to Muslims, and even to many Orthodox and Catholic believers is hindered by such role of women, because it is a stumbling block to them having a woman in a visible position in the temple. After all, and if the apostle advised that weak brothers, who are offended with eating food dedicated to pagan deities, shouldn't be lost by this act, isn't it a

lesson for us today, to take care not to lose the weak brethren by raising women on those functions that we know that it will certainly cause an offense to many Adventists and non-Adventists?!

Of course, there are cases of inspired “offenses” that do not separate people from God, but elevate to God because they rebuke sin and emphasize His work. The “offense” of placing women in a subordinate relation towards men is a rebuke for women who are proudful to serve a man. In the Bible, we have “offense” of election for God’s instrument a person who, because of his gender, or because of his natural modest talents (the case of Gideon), is a rebuke for men’s arrogance and self-confidence. Notwithstanding a man’s natural modest abilities, he can be a powerful weapon in the hand of God, if he is aware of his natural powerlessness and unworthiness.

When the woman Jael killed the commander of the Canaanite army, Sisera, didn’t this offense represent for the Canaanites a testimony that God is in Israel?! Isn’t the Spirit of prophecy through a weak human instrument, Ellen White, also a testimony of God worthy of confidence and trust?

In any case, whatever tools God has used, a message sent to the world should be a rebuke for its lawlessness, and not a lulling of conscience before iniquity. At this moment, our consent to equalize the role of different sexes, is the compliance with the world in its decadence and deviation and not an attempt to solve the problem of lack of staff in the Lord’s cause.

In that decadent world, quoting of the exalted biblical demands often awakes disbelief, and the task of a true Christian historian would be to show, by historical examples, that biblical ideals are not utopia.

Unlike the church of Laodicea, which does not have any praise, the church of the previous historical epoch – Philadelphia, could be a sublime role model and encouragement, which we will see in a historical source from its time, quoted in the next chapter.

"WEAK MEN AND DISORDERLY WOMEN"

(Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835)

I will finish with this observation about the position of women with the answer to the frequent accusation that biblical gender inequality in the family and society was the cause of the restricted rights of female sex throughout history.

This can be true when it comes to the history of the apostate Christianity in which the rights of both sexes, each in their own way, were restricted. But, it is also noted that women were often fleeing from Catholic countries to Protestant, because they knew that freedom from a subordinate position was waiting for them in the Protestant world. In Protestant countries women were at a higher level of respect than they are today, precisely because their female role was highly valued. The woman was regarded as the queen of the house, and the man really related to her in that way. The best food and the best place in the carriages have been given to her and children. Even in those Protestant communities where it was considered that it is inappropriate for women to speak from a church pulpit, believers appreciated her gift of ministering and found ways to express it outside the church pulpit:

"Now the press preaches incomparably more than the pulpit. Through this, all are permitted to preach. Woman, if she may not speak in the church, may speak from the printing room, and her touching expositions of religion, not learned in theological institutions, but in the schools of affection, of sorrow, of experience, of domestic changes, sometimes make their way to the heart more surely than the minister's homilies." (The Christian Palladium, Volume 5, 1836)

Not only Protestant, but also non-Protestant travel writers and historians spoke with admiration about the position of women in the Protestant world. The next report is from 1831, and was published in 1835:

"There are people in Europe who, confounding together the different characteristics of the sexes, would make of man and

woman beings not only equal but alike. They would give to both the same functions, impose on both the same duties, and grant to both the same rights; they would mix them in all things—their occupations, their pleasures, their business. It may readily be conceived, that by thus attempting to make one sex equal to the other, both are degraded; and from so preposterous a medley of the works of nature nothing could ever result but weak men and disorderly women.

It is not thus that the Americans understand that species of democratic equality which may be established between the sexes. They admit, that as nature has appointed such wide differences between the physical and moral constitution of man and woman, her manifest design was to give a distinct employment to their various faculties; and they hold that improvement does not consist in making beings so dissimilar do pretty nearly the same things, but in getting each of them to fulfill their respective tasks in the best possible manner.

The Americans have applied to the sexes the great principle of political economy which governs the manufactures of our age, by carefully dividing the duties of man from those of woman, in order that the great work of society may be the better carried on.

In no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of action for the two sexes, and to make them keep pace one with the other, but in two pathways which are always different. American women never manage the outward concerns of the family, or conduct a business, or take a part in political life; nor are they, on the other hand, ever compelled to perform the rough labor of the fields, or to make any of those laborious exertions which demand the exertion of physical strength. No families are so poor as to form an exception to this rule. If on the one hand an American woman cannot escape from the quiet circle of domestic employments, on the other hand she is never forced to go beyond it. ...

It has often been remarked that in Europe a certain degree of contempt lurks even in the flattery which men lavish upon women: although a European frequently affects to be the slave of woman, it may be seen that he never sincerely thinks her his equal. In the United States men seldom compliment women, but they daily show how much they esteem them. They constantly display an entire confidence in the understanding of a wife, and a profound respect for her freedom; they have decided that her mind is just as fitted as that of a man to discover the plain truth, and her heart as firm to embrace it; and they have never sought to place her virtue, any more than his, under the shelter of prejudice, ignorance, and fear. It would seem that in Europe, where man so easily submits to the despotic sway of women, they are nevertheless curtailed of some of the greatest qualities of the human species, and considered as seductive but imperfect beings; and (what may well provoke astonishment) women ultimately look upon themselves in the same light, and almost consider it as a privilege that they are entitled to show themselves futile, feeble, and timid. The women of America claim no such privileges.

It is true that the Americans rarely lavish upon women those eager attentions which are commonly paid them in Europe; but their conduct to women always implies that they suppose them to be virtuous and refined; and such is the respect entertained for the moral freedom of the sex, that in the presence of a woman the most guarded language is used, lest her ear should be offended by an expression. In America a young unmarried woman may, alone and without fear, undertake a long journey. ... Thus the Americans do not think that man and woman have either the duty or the right to perform the same offices, but they show an equal regard for both their respective parts; and though their lot is different, they consider both of them as beings of equal value. They do not give to the courage of woman the same form or the same direction as to that of man; but they never doubt her courage: and if they hold

that man and his partner ought not always to exercise their intellect and understanding in the same manner, they at least believe the understanding of the one to be as sound as that of the other, and her intellect to be as clear. Thus, then, whilst they have allowed the social inferiority of woman to subsist, they have done all they could to raise her morally and intellectually to the level of man; and in this respect they appear to me to have excellently understood the true principle of democratic improvement. As for myself, I do not hesitate to avow that, although the women of the United States are confined within the narrow circle of domestic life, and their situation is in some respects one of extreme dependence, I have nowhere seen woman occupying a loftier position; and if I were asked, now that I am drawing to the close of this work, in which I have spoken of so many important things done by the Americans, to what the singular prosperity and growing strength of that people ought mainly to be attributed, I should reply—to the superiority of their women.” (Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, Volume 2, 1835)

However, the spiritual and moral decadence of Western civilization soon produced that a woman became arrogant in relation to the dependent position on a man, and out of the same arrogance to seek no longer her greatest happiness in the service of a man and family. This decadence of the role of a woman, noted the famous scientist Nikola Tesla, and said about it the following:

“I had always thought of woman as possessing those delicate qualities of mind and soul that made her in these respects far superior to man. I had put her on a lofty pedestal, figuratively speaking, and ranked her in certain important attributes considerably higher than man. I worshiped at the feet of the creature I had raised to this height, and, like every true worshiper, I felt myself unworthy of the object of my worship.

But all this was in the past. Now the soft-voiced gentle woman of my reverent worship has all but vanished. In her place has come the woman who thinks that her chief success in life lies

in making herself as much as possible like man—in dress, voice and actions, in sports and achievements of every kind. ...

The world has experienced many tragedies, but to my mind the greatest tragedy of all is the present economic condition wherein women strive against men, and in many cases actually succeed in usurping their places in the professions and in industry. This growing tendency of women to overshadow the masculine is a sign of a deteriorating civilization. ...

Practically all the great achievements of man until now have been inspired by his love and devotion to woman. Man has aspired to great things because some woman believed in him, because he wished to command her admiration and respect. For these reasons he has fought for her and risked his life and his all for her time and time again. ... As we contemplate any change, we naturally take into consideration the results that may follow such an innovation. One of the results to my mind is quite a pathetic one. Woman, herself, is really the victim instead of, as she thinks, the victor. Contentment is absent from her life. She is ambitious, often far beyond her natural equipment, to attain the thing she wants. ... Woman's discontent makes the life of the present day still more overstressed. The high pitch given to existence by people who are restless and dissatisfied because they fail to achieve things wholly out of proportion to the health and talent with which Nature has endowed them is a bad thing for the world.

It seems to me that women are not particularly happy in this newly found freedom, in this new competition which they are waging so persistently against men in business and the professions and even in sport. The question that naturally arises is, whether the women themselves are the gainers or the losers. Discontent makes for cranks and unnatural people. There seems to be an uncommon number of them about to-day. This is one of the reasons I remain apart from the crowds." ("Mr. Tesla Explains Why He Will Never Marry." Galveston Daily News, Galveston, Texas, page 23. August 10, 1924.)

AUTHOR'S POSTSCRIPT

I believe that this observation will contribute not only to its readers to realize the vital necessity of the light by which God has illuminated His people through Ellen White, but that this approach will help us to recognize in the history of Adventism a caring hand of God's love, which illuminates the path of the righteous as "But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day" (Proverbs 4:18).

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