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William Clarence (W. C.) White: His Relationship to Ellen G. White and Her Work

Jerry Moon
Andrews University

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AHC	Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University
<u>BE</u>	<u>Bible Echo and Signs of the Times</u>
Bk	Book, an archival category designating letter books in the General Conference Archives
Bx	Box, an archival category in the Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University
Coll	Collection, an archival category in the Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University
DF	Document File, an archival category in the Ellen G. White Research Centers, including the Loma Linda University Heritage Room
EGWRC-GC	Ellen G. White Estate Research Center, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland
EGWRC-AU	Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office and Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan
Fld	Folder, an archival category in the General Conference Archives and in the Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University
GCAr	General Conference Archives, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland
<u>GCB</u>	<u>General Conference Bulletin</u>
GCC Min	General Conference [Executive] Committee Minutes
<u>HR</u>	<u>Health Reformer</u>
LB	Letter book, the form in which duplicate copies of W. C. White's letters were preserved in his files. One series was designated alphabetically, A-J, with inserted additions of A1 and A2. The other series was designated numerically, 1-22, with the addition of 2A, 4A, 5A, 10A, 11A, and 15A. This explains the

existence of separate letter books designated A2 and 2A. The original letter books are at the General Conference office of the Ellen G. White Estate. Microfilm copies are available there and at the Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University.

LLU	Loma Linda University Library, Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office / Department of Archives and Special Collections, Loma Linda, California
<u>MMM</u>	Ellen G. White Estate, <u>Manuscripts and Memories of Minneapolis: Selections from non-Ellen White letters, articles, notes, reports, and pamphlets which deal with the Minneapolis General Conference Session [1888]</u> . Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988
MSU	Michigan State University, Archives and Historical Collections, John Harvey Kellogg Papers, copies in the Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University, Collection 6
<u>PUR</u>	<u>Pacific Union Recorder</u>
<u>RH</u>	<u>Review and Herald; Adventist Review</u>
RG	Record Group, an archival category in the General Conference Archives
SD	Shelf Document, designates documents produced by the Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland (formerly Washington, D.C.) for distribution through the Ellen G. White Research Centers.
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
<u>ST</u>	<u>Signs of the Times</u>
TMs	Typewritten Manuscript
<u>UCR</u>	[Australasian] <u>Union Conference Record</u>
WCWCF	W. C. White Correspondence File, an archival category at the Ellen G. White Estate Research Center, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland. The W. C. White Correspondence File contains incoming correspondence to both Ellen White and W. C. White, outgoing correspondence from W. C. White, and is in addition to the W. C. White letter books.
<u>YI</u>	<u>Youth's Instructor</u>

here and there, and although he bears a very sad heart as he sees Mary—who has been so unselfish, so forgetful of self—weak and an invalid, yet he tries to be cheerful and never speaks one word of repining. He talks with me, and weeps over these things sometimes.¹

In May, Willie took Mary to Burrough Valley in central California, hoping the drier climate might promote her recovery. Ellen White joined them there until the first week of October, when she and Willie left for the General Conference session in Minneapolis, Minnesota.²

The 1888 General Conference Session

The twenty-seventh regular session of the General Conference convened in Minneapolis, Minnesota, from October 17 to November 4, 1888. It was preceded by a ministerial institute held October 10 through 16.³

The session was remembered as the occasion of a denominational crisis of the first magnitude which had an impact on the body for years afterward. The controversy began as a multi-faceted theological debate in which two young editors from Oakland, California, E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, took positions diametrically opposed to cherished views of leaders in Battle Creek, particularly G. I. Butler, president of the General Conference, and Uriah Smith, Review and Herald editor and the denomination's leading writer on prophetic interpretation. When Ellen White first insisted on a hearing for the Californian upstarts, and then came out strongly in favor of Jones and Waggoner's theology on justification, some

¹E. G. White to Sister Scott, May 4, 1888, EGWRC-AU.

²E. G. White to S. N. Haskell, May 29, 1888; E. G. White to J. H. Kellogg, June 22, 1888, EGWRC-AU.

³A daily chronology of events at the session from Oct. 10 through Nov. 4, 1888, is found in Clinton L. Wahlen, "Selected Aspects of Ellet J. Waggoner's Eschatology and Their Relation to His Understanding of Righteousness by Faith, 1882-1895" (M.Div. thesis, Andrews University, 1988), 71-77.

who sympathized with Butler and Smith believed that she was taking positions that contradicted her earlier writings, a phenomenon they could account for only by conjecturing that she was being influenced by her son W. C. White. Thus both Ellen and W. C. White became objects of suspicion. In general, the spirit of the conference was characterized more by theological wrangling than by loving fellowship, although those who accepted Jones and Waggoner's teaching on justification found that it revitalized their spiritual life.¹

To give a comprehensive account of the session and its issues is beyond the scope of this dissertation. An extensive body of literature has been produced on the historical and theological issues of that session.²

The most important contributions of W. C. White to the Minneapolis meetings (and the subsequent understanding of them) were his advocacy for the holding of the ministerial institute, so that the conference would not be wholly given to business matters; the notes he took on the happenings during the meetings; his attempt to mediate between the contending factions, thereby bringing heavy criticism from the opponents of E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones; and his alliance with his mother in blocking certain resolutions which they recognized as having creedal tendencies.³

¹The conflicts in which Ellen and W. C. White were allies are discussed in detail below, under "W. C. White as Administrator." On the experience of those who accepted Jones and Waggoner's message on justification, see E. G. White, "The Excellence of Christ," MS 10, 1889, EGWRC-AU.

²An extensive survey of the literature through 1988 is found in Wahlen, "Waggoner's Eschatology," xiii-xxxv, 220-227. A significant work issued subsequently, hence not included in Wahlen's bibliography is Knight, Angry Saints. Some of the extant primary source documents have been published in The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), and in Manuscripts and Memories of Minneapolis (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988).

³W. C. White to G. I. Butler, July 11, 1888, in MMM, 74; Wahlen, "Waggoner's Eschatology," 68-70; W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 164-173;

W. C. White's attempts to ensure a fair hearing for Jones and Waggoner and his partnership with his mother in opposing the tactics of their opponents were widely criticized and resulted in alienating him from some of his colleagues. Halfway through the conference he confided to Mary that he was so "decidedly unpopular" that he expected to "have no offices forced upon" him. But despite being openly blamed for supporting Waggoner and Jones and suspected of manipulating his mother, he was nevertheless re-elected to the executive committee. He was also made the foreign mission secretary, the chairman of the book committee, and the vice-president of the International Tract Society. Then, after the return of the General Conference leaders to Battle Creek, he was elected to serve as acting president of the General Conference.¹ Notwithstanding these honors, W. C. White was still regarded with suspicion for his part in the controversy at the 1888 session, the conflicts and tensions of which would continue for several years.

The Minneapolis portion of the session adjourned on Sunday, November 4, "to meet in Battle Creek at such time during the present week as may be designated by the Chair," S. N. Haskell. The final meeting was held "in the Tabernacle" at Battle Creek on Thursday, November 8.²

W. C. White to M. K. White, Nov. 3, 1888, in MMM, 123; E. G. White, "Counsel to Ministers," Oct. 21, 1888, MS 8a, 1888, EGWRC-AU.

¹W. C. White to M. K. White, Oct. 27, 1888; "Thirteenth Day's Proceedings," GCB, Nov. 1, 1888, 1; "International Tract and Missionary Society," GCB, Nov. 1, 1888, 2; Dan T. Jones, "The General Conference," RH, Nov. 27, 1888, 749.

²S. N. Haskell and U. Smith, "Fourteenth Day's Proceedings," RH, Nov. 13, 1888, 713-14; U. Smith and W. H. Edwards, "Fifteenth Day's Proceedings," RH, Nov. 20, 1888, 728.

Acting General Conference President,
1888-1889

About November 19, 1888, W. C. White, as mentioned above, was chosen by the executive committee "to act as president till Eld. Olsen shall return." White would carry those responsibilities almost six months, till Olsen arrived in Battle Creek on May 7, 1889.¹

During January and February of 1889 White combined his presidential responsibilities with accompanying his mother in travel. After eleven days in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, he took a side trip to "do business in Philadelphia," reconnecting with her in Washington, D.C. There she noted his fatigue: "W. C. White is pressed, it seems to me, beyond measure. I feel deeply anxious for him at times." They returned through Pennsylvania and New York to Battle Creek. After a weekend trip to Indianapolis, Ellen wrote to Mary, "I fear W. C. White is so pressed with much writing and committee meetings that you will, my dear child, be crowded out." Near the end of March she remarked that he had had "a hard pull for weeks. Yes, all the time, and I hope when he crosses the plains to California that he will rest all he can. . . . We have had a long pull here at B[attle] C[reek] but we think much good has been done."²

The "hard pull" was a consequence, not merely of White's administrative load as acting president, but also of the continuation of the tensions and conflicts that had surfaced at Minneapolis. Some respite came in the spring of 1889. Mary

¹W. C. White to M. K. White, Nov. 19, Nov. 24, 1888, in MMM, 124, 126; Dan T. Jones, "The General Conference," RH, Nov. 27, 1888, 749; O. A. Olsen, "The Annual Meetings in Scandinavia," RH, May 28, 1889, 347-48.

²E. G. White, Diary, Jan. 1889, MS 17, 1889; E. G. White to Sister Ings, Jan. 26, 1889; E. G. White, Diary, Feb. 1889, MS 18, 1889; E. G. White to M. K. White, Feb. [25-26], 1889 (Letter 63, 1889); E. G. White to Sister Ings, M. K. White, and Sister McOmber, Mar. 28, 1889, EGWRC-AU.

came to Boulder, Colorado, for the summer, and W. C. White was able to spend a few weeks with her there during April and early May. On the way back to Battle Creek, he attended a camp meeting at Ottawa, Kansas, where O. A. Olsen was making one of his first stateside appearances as General Conference president. Ellen White and A. T. Jones were the other leading speakers. After Mrs. White's "decided testimony was the means of opening the eyes" of several leading ministers, W. C. White said he sensed for the first time a "melting away" of the "ice barrier" that had separated him from his colleagues at Minneapolis. At Ottawa they again "enjoyed precious seasons in planning about the work." After staying most of a week at the Ottawa meeting, White and Olsen returned to Battle Creek to complete the transfer of their presidential responsibilities.¹

The 1889 General Conference Session and the Death of Mary White

At the General Conference session held in Battle Creek from October 18 through November 22, 1889, W. C. White was re-elected foreign mission secretary, member of the executive committee, and member of several other committees.²

Ellen White was "much pleased" with the tone of this conference. "The spirit that was in the meeting in Minneapolis is not here," she said. "The universal testimony from those who have spoken has been that this message of light and truth which has come to our people is just the truth for this time." "We have a feast of fat things," she exulted. Furthermore, the ministers who accepted "the light that came to them at Minneapolis" and afterward, reported that "success has attended

¹O. A. Olsen, "The Annual Meetings in Scandinavia," RH, May 28, 1889, 347-48; W. C. White to M. K. White, May 15, May 17, 1889, in MMM, 138-140; W. C. White to L. R. Conradi, June 26, 1889, in MMM, 145-46.

²E. G. White, Diary, Sept. 1889, MS 21, 1889, EGWRC-AU; "General Conference Proceedings: Twelfth Meeting," GCB, Oct. 31, 1889, 123.

their labors during the past year as never before and they [have] enjoyed the presence and the love of God in large measure."¹

Immediately following the conference, a Bible school for ministers opened in Battle Creek on November 6, 1889, and continued through March 24, 1890.

Olsen reported that

one important feature of the Bible School was the labors of Sister White. For over a month she attended quite regularly our morning devotion, which, during this time, occupied one hour and a half or more. These were seasons of special interest, and will long be remembered by those who were present.²

Jean Vuilleumier of Switzerland, who was in Battle Creek at the time, recorded in his diary several excerpts from Ellen White's preaching. According to his notes, on December 18 she climaxed her sermon with an impassioned appeal:

"You are as cold as ice and as hard as an iron wedge. You have not enough strength to say Amen. . . . Enough sermonizing! Empty the front pews. Let us pass to the practice." She calls: "Come, sinners!" Hundreds repent, confess, cry, and pray. Mrs. White concludes with a powerful "Praise the Lord!" and a not less impressive "Amen!"³

When someone would confess his wrong condition in Minneapolis the year before, she would go and shake his hand, "a touching scene."⁴

After months of this kind of preaching, she could finally report on March 10, 1890, that "the current is changing." "The backbone of the rebellion is broken in those who have come in from other places." Two days later she "called a meeting" of the local leaders. At this meeting the allegation of what George Knight

¹E. G. White to Daughter Mary, Oct. 29, 1889; E. G. White, "The Excellence of Christ," MS 10, 1889, EGWRC-AU.

²O. A. Olsen, "The Ministers' School," RH, Apr. 1, 1890, 200-201.

³Jean Vuilleumier, Diary, Dec. 18, Nov. 3, 1889, quoted by Pietro Emilio Copiz, "Ellen G. White in the Diary of Jean Vuilleumier (1885-1891)," in Ellen G. White and Europe: Centennial Symposium, 1885/1887-1987 (Bracknell, Berks., England: Ellen G. White Research Centre, Europe, 1987), 446.

⁴Ibid.

has termed the "California conspiracy" finally came out into the open. Ellen White convincingly refuted the idea that the California group of delegates had had any pre-planned strategy to dominate the 1888 conference session.¹

The problem went deeper, however, than a simple misunderstanding. She identified the root of the difficulty as "the ever-ready evading of the testimonies. 'It is Sister White's mind, her opinions; and her opinions are no better than our opinions, unless it is something she has seen in vision.'" Again and again she zeroed in on this issue. "Why," she asked the ministers, "is your interpretation of the law in Galatians more dear to you, and [why are] you more zealous to maintain your ideas on this point, than [you are] to acknowledge the workings of the Spirit of God?" She spoke of the "precious ideas" they "had idolized on the law of Galatians," and challenged them:

If you are such very cautious men and so very critical lest you shall receive something not in accordance with the Scriptures, I want your minds to look on these things in the true light. Let your caution be exercised in the line of fear lest you are committing the sin against the Holy Ghost.²

At a final meeting (about March 19), Ellen White said she "talked as they had never heard me talk before," again reviewing "the transactions at Minneapolis and since that time." Finally they believed her. "Suffice it to say," she reported to Willie and Mary, "the whole atmosphere is changed." Brother Dan Jones "is a changed man." While the crisis was not over, the worst of the misconceptions about the California conspiracy seemed to have been laid to rest.³

¹E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, Mar. 10, Mar. 13, 1890, EGWRC-AU; cf. E. G. White to W. C. White, Mar. 19, 1890, EGWRC-AU; W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 164-173; on the "California conspiracy," see Knight, From 1888 to Apostasy, 31-33.

²E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, Mar. 13[-17], 1890, in E. G. White, 1888 Materials, 2:631-32.

³E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, Mar. 19, 1890, in E. G. White,

Meanwhile, W. C. White was in Boulder, Colorado, spending some farewell time with Mary. She died June 18, 1890, of the tuberculosis she had contracted in Europe. She was thirty-three. Her funeral was held June 25 in the Battle Creek Tabernacle.¹

About three weeks after the funeral, Ellen White left Battle Creek for the cooler climate of Petoskey, a resort town on the shore of Lake Michigan near the northern tip of Michigan's lower peninsula. She sought relief from the heat, rest from the conflicts and pressures of headquarters, and an opportunity to write with fewer interruptions her book on the life of Christ.²

W. C. White, for his part, continued a hectic pace. Perhaps it was a way of coping with his grief. Repeatedly his mother urged him, O. A. Olsen, and D. T. Jones to come to Petoskey for rest,³ while she herself confessed to guilt feelings for not being on the camp-meeting circuit. "I want to see you here and counsel with you," she wrote to Willie.

I feel sometimes as though it is a terrible neglect of duty to be here while camp meetings are being held, but again I consider it is the first rest I have had in my life. I speak, however, twice each week, write from twelve to twenty-five pages nearly every day, then when my head gets tired I go out in the berry patch. . . .

I wish you were here this moment. I cannot consent to give this up. You must come and see us and the place. I am glad you feel as you do about my attending camp meetings. I feel guilty sometimes.⁴

1888 Materials, 2:642-44.

¹W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 170-73; W. C. White to J. N. Loughborough, June 26, 1890, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; "Mary Kelsey White: Funeral," DF 726a, EGWRC-AU.

²E. G. White to Willie and the Household, July 17, 1890, EGWRC-AU.

³E. G. White to Son Willie, July 24, 1890; E. G. White to O. A. Olsen and D. T. Jones, July 27, 1890; E. G. White to O. A. Olsen and W. C. White, July 29, 1890; E. G. White to Son Willie, July 31, 1890, EGWRC-AU.

⁴E. G. White to W. C. White, Aug. 11, 1890, EGWRC-AU.

It appears that W. C. White did make it to Petoskey briefly in early September, just before he left with his mother for the eastern camp meetings. They spent most of October and November on the road, attending camp meetings and other appointments in New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., and Virginia.¹

Further Conflict and Exile, 1891

During January of 1891 the post-Minneapolis conflict continued in Battle Creek. Ellen White alternately pleaded with and chastised the leadership for their opposition to the message of Jones and Waggoner. The 1891 General Conference session was held in Battle Creek from March 5 through 25. One proposal not voted on was that Ellen White go to Australia to build up the denominational work there. Official action was taken to establish an Australian college but without specifically calling for her or her son's involvement. She strongly hoped that no such call would come.²

Before the conference was over she sent a strong letter to O. A. Olsen warning him of the "design" of certain members of the General Conference committee "to disconnect their work from me" and "to separate all who have connection with me and my work, from the great whole," in order to have "Sister White" "out of the way." This letter appears in retrospect to have been directly related to the question of sending Ellen and W. C. White to Australia.³

¹E. G. White to W. C. White, Sept. 2, 1890, EGWRC-AU; O. A. Olsen, "Arrangements for Laborers," RH, Sept. 16, 1890, 576.

²E. G. White, Diary, Jan. 3, 1891, MS 40, 1891, EGWRC-AU; "Program for General Conference," GCB, Mar. 6, 1891, 1; A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 3:483, 490.

³E. G. White to O. A. Olsen, Mar. 20, 1891, EGWRC-AU. The letter is quoted more fully in the topical section under "W. C. White as Administrator."

On May 4 Ellen White again headed north to her summer cottage in Petoskey, Michigan. Willie would follow in a few days and spend the first half of May with her there.¹

Partly because of the beautiful climate and location, and partly because it was near Ellen White's residence, W. W. Prescott selected Harbor Springs, Michigan, just north of Petoskey, for a six-week teachers' convention. The convention became the occasion for W. C. White to spend several more weeks with his mother from July 17 to August 10, 1891. By then the General Conference committee had firmly decided to send the two of them to Australia.²

When W. C. White returned from Petoskey, the impending departure to Australia was heavy on his mind. Meanwhile, his daughters' guardian, Mary Mortenson, had taken Ella May and Mabel on a brief trip to Minnesota. "I felt rather lonesome," White wrote to Mortenson, "to come home yesterday and find the house empty." "I miss the children. It makes me feel rather serious about going away for so long a time, but as it seems to be duty, I will go with thinking of this as little as possible." Four years would pass before he saw his daughters again. On September 9, W. C. White and his mother left Battle Creek to attend camp meetings in the west. They sailed for Australia November 12, 1891.³

¹E. G. White to Sister Sarah, May 4, 1891; E. G. White to Son Willie, May 19, 1891, EGWRC-AU.

²Valentine, "William Warren Prescott: Seventh-day Adventist Educator," 174-82; W. C. White to E. G. White, July 15, 1891, LB 2a, 536-37; W. C. White to Mary C. Mortenson, Aug. 12, 1891, LB 2a, 672-73, EGWRC-AU.

³Ibid.; [editorial note], RH, Sept. 15, 1891, 576; [editorial note], RH, Nov. 17, 1891, 720.

W. C. White's Relationship to His Mother
and Her Work, 1881-1891

As noted previously, by the time of his father's death in 1881, W. C. White was escorting his mother in travel, assisting her editorially, and carrying various leadership responsibilities in the denomination. During the decade from 1881 to 1891, W. C. White's relationship to his mother took on new dimensions because of his heavy responsibilities as a denominational administrator and her needs for his editorial help and counsel.

W. C. White as Administrator

W. C. White's first experience in General Conference administration came in the late 1870s under the more-or-less direct tutelage of his father.¹ As his responsibilities grew in the 1880s, his mother became his chief mentor.

Ranking Officer in Europe, 1885-1887

During the European years (1885 to 1887) the Whites spent a great deal of time working and traveling together. During that period, W. C. White was the ranking General Conference officer in Europe. This, coupled with Mrs. White's unique position as prophetic leader of the church, gave them almost unrestricted administrative authority in denominational affairs in Europe. Because she was his superior by age and experience as well as by the source of her authority, she became his mentor. They collaborated on a wide variety of decisions, but because they were together so much of the time the written records of their relationship are sporadic and fragmentary.

Often their association was in the context of matters that particularly depended on her unique gifts. For example, W. C. White was a witness as his

¹See pp. 28-29, above.

mother counseled a minister, Daniel T. Bourdeau, who had become severely alienated from other workers and from her.¹

In another case they worked together in a situation that was more specifically under W. C. White's administrative purview. John G. Matteson, after disfellowshipping three church members in a stormy meeting that split the church in Christiania, Norway, had "resigned his position as president of the publishing association and elder of the church." On the next day, according to Ellen White's diary, "W. C. White and I had a long talk with Elder Matteson. I think we were able to help his mind some on several points, and to have him see he could not now lay down his responsibilities."²

Their combined authority and relative isolation from other counselors made it possible and sometimes necessary to make rather unilateral decisions. One instance occurred in Basel. "W. C. White conversed with me," wrote Mrs. White in her diary, "and we thought it would be pleasing to the Lord to appropriate" funds to the Scandinavian Mission for purchasing a tent and a library.³ They recognized a need and acted on it, and their action was justified by the pioneering nature of the work. This kind of independent action often repeated, however, probably contributed to an administrative style that later on in Australia would get W. C. White into trouble.

In noting the patterns of their working together, it is clear that the dominant role in counsel was definitely hers. An instructive incident that occurred

¹E. G. White, "Labors in Switzerland—No. 1," Diary, Sept. 25 to Oct. 5, 1885, MS 24, 1885, EGWRC-AU; A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 3:306-314.

²E. G. White, "Second Visit to Norway," Diary, July 12-13, 1886, MS 66, 1886, EGWRC-AU.

³E. G. White, Diary, Feb. 25, 1887, MS 29, 1887, EGWRC-AU.

in 1885 shows W. C. White's submissive attitude when his mother, in her Testimony 32, critiqued an aspect of his administrative program. "At first it seemed to me," he wrote to O. A. Olsen, "that some parts of the instruction would break up our plans which appeared to be successful, but like all other instruction of this character we know it will work for the good of the cause in the end although we may not be wise enough to understand just now." With a characteristic twist of irony he concluded, "I do not understand that it condem[n]s our present plan as worse than nothing, but that it points out a better way."¹

While W. C. White was sometimes reproved by his mother, it appears that he often sought her counsel before setting plans in motion, so that many mistakes could be avoided. The result was a relatively successful administrative experience. W. C. White returned from Europe in 1887 ready to act a larger part in the deliberations of the church.

Amending the Constitution, 1887

The broader perspective and increased confidence W. C. White had gained from his European experience are implied in an incident at the 1887 General Conference session. The occurrence also provides a glimpse of how the Whites cooperated in administrative matters. The nomination of the executive officers of the General Conference occasioned an extended speech in which White urged the necessity of improving the efficiency of the General Conference. Supporting the nomination of Mrs. M. J. Chapman as corresponding secretary, he noted that he had himself "introduced the matter of having a corresponding secretary" in order to lighten the burdens of the General Conference president. He opined that "the amount of work for the President is doubling every year" due to the accounts and

¹W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, June 28, 1885, LB A, 328, EGWRC-AU.

reports coming to him from all parts of the field. Other persons should also be employed to aid the president, "not as managers, but as secretaries" over various aspects of the work. Specifically he recommended creating the positions of foreign missions secretary, home missionary secretary, and educational secretary.¹

Ellen White spoke next, elaborating the need for "persons who could do much of the detail routine work, so that Elder Butler can trust it entirely to them, and thus be relieved." She declared that she "would not lift her hand [i.e., vote] to elect Elder Butler President of this Conference if he could not have this help." After further discussion by others, W. C. White moved to amend the constitution to add the three new positions and the motion was carried.²

No records of their private conversations reveal which of the Whites originated this plan. It may have evolved from extended discussions between them. In making similar proposals in 1888, W. C. White described his administrative initiatives as being consistent with what his mother had seen in vision. Likewise during the 1890s, his administrative innovations in the South Pacific were simultaneous with her continuing counsels toward decentralization and delegation of authority.³

Mediating at Minneapolis, 1888

Prelude to conflict

W. C. White's personal involvement in the issues of the 1888 General Conference session began with a premonition of the conflict to which they might

¹"Seventh Day's Proceedings," GCB, Nov. 21, 1887, 1-3.

²Ibid.

³W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Nov. 27, 1888, in MMM, 132; Oliver, SDA Organizational Structure, 184-201, 298-99, 337.

lead. "In the spring of 1885," while White and E. J. Waggoner were "walking in the woods" together, Waggoner "introduced two points over which he was perplexed." The first concerned the "apparent necessity of taking positions while pursuing his editorial work that would be in conflict with Eld. Canright's writings" and the second concerned the controversy of many years earlier over the identity of the "added law" mentioned in Gal 3:19--a conflict, interestingly enough, in which W. C. White's father and E. J. Waggoner's father had been on opposite sides.¹

White's response to Waggoner's questions was that the editors of the Signs "should teach what they believed to be truth, [even] if it did conflict with some things written by Eld. Canright and others." But regarding the other issue, White advised him to "avoid it if possible." It may be that White took no particular interest in the issue, for he admitted that during the years he was in Europe he had not read the articles on Galatians which E. J. Waggoner had written in the Signs. Only in the summer of 1888, when open conflict had become imminent, did White take the time to study those articles.²

The circumstance that prompted White to examine the issues more carefully was his association with Waggoner and Jones in Oakland, California, in the summer of 1888. "It was proposed" that on Monday and Tuesday (June 25-26) "the editors of the Signs [Waggoner and A. T. Jones], C. H. Jones [manager of the Pacific Press], and myself [W. C. White], and as many of the California ministers as we could get to join us should go out into the mountains and spend a few days in Bible study." Somewhere in the mountains east of Oakland they found a suitable meeting place that White dubbed "Camp Necessity." Here they studied the "history

¹W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 164-173.

²Ibid., 166.

of the different kingdoms that acted a part in the dismemberment of Rome." After an "examination" of Butler's The Law in Galatians and related topics, Waggoner read to the group the manuscript of his reply to Butler (later published as The Gospel in Galatians). "At the close of our study," White recalled,

Eld. Waggoner asked us if it would be right for him to publish his MSS and at the next Gen[eral Conf]erence place them in the hands of the delegates, as Eld. Butler had [done with] his [pamphlet]. We thought this would be right, and encouraged him to have five hundred copies printed. We made no secret of this, nor did we take any pains to make it public.¹

If the participants in the study retreat at Camp Necessity took no "pains to make it public," another California minister did. Certain that Butler needed to know about the "rebellion" being fomented, William Healey whipped off an incendiary letter (or letters) to Butler, warning him of the conspiracy. Butler read the correspondence and burned it, but the stage had been set for a monumental clash.²

Meanwhile, W. C. White had been "corresponding with Eld. Butler about the Institute to precede the Minneapolis Conf[erence]." As he had done earlier in Europe, White urged the importance of holding a Biblical Institute for ten or fourteen days preceding the General Conference session in Minneapolis. "I cannot feel but [that] the business of our corporations has taken up too much of the time of our conferences in the last few years, and such an institute as this would help to balance up the matter." White suggested some possible topics for study, including

¹Ibid., 167-8; "Notes Made by W. C. White at 'Camp Necessity,' June 25 and 26, 1888," in MMM, 414-418; G. I. Butler, The Law in the Book of Galatians: Is It the Moral Law, or Does It Refer to that System of Laws Peculiarly Jewish? (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1886); E. J. Waggoner, The Gospel in the Book of Galatians: A Review (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1888).

²E. G. White to W. M. Healey, Dec. 9, 1888 and Aug. 21, 1901, in E. G. White, 1888 Materials, 1:186-89, 4:1757-61; Knight, 1888 to Apostasy, 31-33.

"various Bible doctrines," but did not specify any particular doctrines he had in mind.¹

In reply, Butler "gave a list of the subjects which he said he supposed would come up for consideration. Among these he named prominently the Ten Kingdoms and the Law in Gal[atians]" as potential subjects for discussion. In retrospect, White guessed Butler's purpose had been to "draw me out more fully" (i.e., find out what W. C. White believed about those subjects), but at the time he did not recognize the president's intent. Thinking that Butler was genuinely open to having the issues fully discussed, White "notified Jones and Waggoner of this letter, and so of course they took . . . their reference books" with them to Minneapolis.²

The studies at Camp Necessity, the printing of Waggoner's tract, W. C. White's promotion of the ministerial institute, Jones' and Waggoner's bringing their reference books to Minneapolis, and Healey's inflammatory allegations to Butler would later lend credibility to the idea that the leading members of the California delegation had formed a confederation to force their views on the General Conference.

After the Camp Necessity meeting, White had returned to Burrough Valley, California, where Mary was still trying vainly to survive her tuberculosis. "Our study of the ten kingdoms" had "aroused my interest," he later recalled, so that he took with him to Burrough Valley

a set of Gibbon[']s Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire], and using the references which I had noted down during our hurried study in the mountains, I carefully went over the ground again, numbering the paragraphs in my book,

¹W. C. White to G. I. Butler, July 11, 1888, in MMM, 74.

²W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 169-70, 166; the letter from Butler has been lost, but White's recollections of it are supported by W. C. White to G. I. Butler, Aug. 16, 1888, in MMM, 75, which may in fact be White's reply to the lost Butler correspondence.

and marking those which related to the rise and progress of the ten kingdoms. In this study I became satisfied that as far as the testimony of Gibbon was concerned, Eld. Jones had more historical evidence for his position than Eld. Smith.¹

In addition, after receiving Butler's letter raising the issue of the law in Galatians as a possible topic for study, White obtained back issues of the Signs and read Waggoner's articles on Galatians. As the time came to leave for Minneapolis, White packed his well-marked "set of Gibbon" in expectation of a pleasant reunion with colleagues and a mutually enjoyable experience in study.²

On the train, the California delegation traveled together. Ellen White wrote to Mary White (who was too weak to travel) that "Willie and the ministers have had their Bible readings and searchings on the law. I did not even listen, for I wanted rest of mind and body." On their arrival in Minneapolis, the Whites were shown to "two good hired rooms, richly furnished with plush chairs and sofas," but did not feel comfortable with such luxury. Instead they moved to rooms in a plain house which had been rented for delegates to board in. The room Ellen shared with Sara McInterfer had a fireplace--a valued source of heat in the near-winter of Minnesota. "Will has a chamber above with stove in his room," Ellen reported. "Two brethren sleep in a bed in the same room. Then they have a small room to do their writing in, and Willie is just as pleased with this as he can be."³

From goose to goat

By his own account, W. C. White "went to Minneapolis as innocent as a goose" regarding the impending imbroglio. "I mistrusted nothing," he averred. But

¹W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 168-171.

²Ibid.

³E. G. White to M. K. White, Oct. 8, Oct. 9, 1888, EGWRC-AU.

he was not long in finding out that influential people considered him the cause of the problem. President Butler had written a thirty-nine-page letter to Ellen White that was probably waiting for her when she stepped off the train in Minneapolis. It is not known how soon her son may have learned of its contents.¹

Butler did not leave his views in doubt. After a lengthy peroration on the denominational crisis he saw being precipitated by the new view of the law in Galatians, he came to the point. This heresy "had every appearance of being sanctioned by some one in leading positions. I knew," he declared to Ellen White,

that Eld. E. J. Waggoner was not a fool, and would not go on in this bold and unprecedented [sic] manner on his own responsibility. Neither have I ever believed that you could really sanction such a movement. But I have believed and still do to the present time that your son W. C. White is more responsible for it than any other man.²

Had not W. C. White "sustained it" by his influence, the heresy "never would have assumed such proportions, or dared to cut such a figure," reasoned Butler. "I have been forced to believe," he concluded, "that your influence has been in some way lugged in, though I do not believe that you intended it to be." After supporting his contentions about W. C. White for another half page, he summarized.

He [White] has always apologised for [sic, i.e., defended] their [Jones' and Waggoner's] course, and has never seemed to think there was anything particularly wrong in it, though he has known full well how I have regarded it. I can therefore only conclude that he has sustained it with the full strength of his influence.³

Butler's view seemed to W. C. White to be echoed by most of the Battle Creek delegation. Willie later recalled that

while my old friends at B[atle] C[reek] and even my own relatives were saying

¹W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 171; G. I. Butler to E. G. White, Oct. 1, 1888, in MMM, 77-118.

²G. I. Butler to E. G. White, Oct. 1, 1888, in MMM, 77-118, emphasis added.

³Ibid.

the bitterest things about me, I mistrusted nothing, supposed that our brethren were really anxious to get the historical evidence with reference to the ten kingdoms, and in trying to save time by making it easy for them to find the passages in Gibbon, I secured the reputation of being an offensive partisan.¹

In actual fact, W. C. White "protested before the committee, and in private with Elder Waggoner, against having the time [of the Biblical Institute] taken up by his [Waggoner's] six or seven long speeches." He felt that giving Waggoner more time than his opponents received lent credibility to the charges of bias in favor of Waggoner. White said he had "argued most earnestly" for "a fair division of the time, so that each of the subjects should have its share." However, in public he had supported Waggoner and A. T. Jones, because he saw they were already the underdogs, and he did not want to diminish their chances for a fair hearing. As White later recalled,

If Elds. Waggoner and Jones had been on the side of the majority I might have said before the committee or in public what I have said to them in private, and criticised [*sic*] their methods and work, but because they were in a hopeless minority, and I have not criticised them openly, I have been set down as more responsible than they, in all they have done that was subject to criticism.²

D. T. Jones expressed the views of many when he admitted to W. C. White: "I have laid more blame on you, in my own mind, than upon all the others . . . as I thought you was [*sic*] the one that was responsible for it all."³

Thus W. C. White became the scapegoat. Eighteen months later he could be philosophical about the results of his attempt to mediate: "I suppose I ought not to be surprised because it is frequently the reward the peace-maker gets to be suspected and condemned by both parties." But at the time it was a bitter pill. On

¹See D. T. Jones to W. C. White, Mar. 18, 1890, in MMM, 160; W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 171.

²W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 171.

³D. T. Jones to W. C. White, Mar. 18, 1890, in MMM, 160.

Saturday night, October 27, 1888, ten days after the opening of the Conference session proper, W. C. White expressed his feelings pointedly to his wife, Mary. The letter has been torn, creating some gaps in the sentences, but the gist of it is clear.

Mother has done lots of hard work. She is some discouraged just now, for it is a dark time. Much that Dr. W[aggoner] teaches is in line with what she has seen in vision, and she has spoken repeatedly against the "Spirit of Pharaseeism" [sic] that would crush him down, and condemn all he says as erroneous. Some then take it that she endorses all his views an[d because] part of his teaching disagrees w[ith her] and with her Testimonies, they s[ay that] my endeavor to push Dr. W's views [mis]led her as to the real issue and i[n]fluenced her to take a position contrary to her p[revious writ]ings.

"I could prove all this to be f[alse]," he confided. "[I] may sometime have an opportunity." But right now, I am seen "in the minds of many" as the "Jonah that has brought on the st[orm]." "I am decided[ly unpop]ular, and I am not sorry," he told Mary, "for I shall have no offices forced upon me."¹

Ellen White's credibility was faring little better. She later reflected on the experience,

When I plainly stated my faith, there were many who did not understand me and they reported that Sister White had changed; Sister White was influenced by her son W. C. White and by Elder A. T. Jones. . . . I became the subject of remarks and criticism, but no one of our brethren came to me and made inquiries or sought any explanation from me. We tried most earnestly to have all our ministering brethren rooming in the house meet in an unoccupied room and unite our prayers together, but did not succeed in this but two or three times. They chose to go to their own rooms and have their conversation and prayers by themselves. There did not seem to be any opportunity to break down the prejudice that was so firm and determined, no chance to remove the misunderstanding in regard to myself, my son, and E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones.²

¹W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 171; W. C. White to M. K. White, Oct. 27, 1888, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC, emphasis added, bracketed words represent conjectural reconstruction.

²E. G. White, "Looking Back at Minneapolis," MS 24, 1888, EGWRC-AU.

Allies in parliamentary debate

As the debate continued over the most divisive issue, the law in Galatians, Ellen White insisted that both sides of the question should be presented. One partisan insinuated that Ellen wanted to close off any discussion opposed to the positions of Waggoner and Jones. Both she and Willie denied the allegation that they were trying to limit the debate. Both of them "spoke decidedly that we would not have the matter end here by any means." Rather, she insisted in retrospect, "we desired that they should bring out all the evidence on both sides of the question for all we wanted was the truth, Bible truth, to be brought before the people."¹

Despite these denials, it was rumored in a meeting the next morning that "Sister White was opposed to the other side of the question being discussed." According to her own account, she missed that meeting but was defended by her son. W. C. White insisted that she was indeed determined to hear both sides of the question and repeated what she had said "in the council of the ministers the night before." It is certain that she approved of Willie's representation of her position, for she affirmed in retrospect that "the matter was set before them in the correct light."²

In the "college meeting" (probably the second meeting of the Educational Association, October 28), W. C. White and his mother were again allied against strong opposition. A resolution had been proposed that "nothing be taught in our school at Battle Creek contrary to what has been taught in the past, or as approved

¹E. G. White, "Looking Back at Minneapolis," MS 24, 1888, EGWRC-AU. This probably took place the evening of Mon., Oct. 22; see Wahlen, "Waggoner's Eschatology," 74.

²E. G. White, "Looking Back at Minneapolis," MS 24, 1888, EGWRC-AU; cf. W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 171. These events probably took place Mon. evening, Oct. 22 and Tues. morning, Oct. 23; see Wahlen, "Waggoner's Eschatology," 74.

by the General Conference Committee." The intent of the motion was to "muzzle" A. T. Jones, who had been hired to teach Bible at Battle Creek College. Ellen White spoke decidedly against it and, with her son's support, succeeded in blocking it,¹ although a resolution of similar intent slipped through another committee before the session closed.²

Referring to the incident a few days later, W. C. White observed that "there is almost a craze for orthodoxy. A resolution was introduced into the college meeting, that no new doctrine be taught there till it had been adopted by the General Conf[erence]. Mother and I killed it dead, after a hard fight." The following day Ellen White used terms that show that she too thought it had been a "hard fight." "This has been a most laborious meeting," she wrote, "for Willie and I have had to watch at every point lest there should be moves made, resolutions passed, that would prove detrimental to the future work." When the conference was over, she praised Willie's "sentinal duty" on "committees, committees, committees."³ His close cooperation with her had significantly enlarged her influence at the conference.

The events of Minneapolis illuminate the relationship of W. C. White to his mother. They had rooms near each other, evidently conferred often, and were allies both in theological discussion and in parliamentary debate. Willie knew his mother well enough that he could speak for her on short notice and have her later affirm that he had spoken accurately. This does not imply that they never had

¹"Educational Association," GCB, Oct. 30, 1888, 1; R. B. Craig to L. E. Froom, May 1930, cited in LeRoy Edwin Froom, Movement of Destiny (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1971), 253-54; Knight, Angry Saints, 104; Roger W. Coon, "Minneapolis/1888: The 'Forgotten' Issue," 9-13, SD, EGWRC-AU.

²"How New Theories Shall Be Presented," Nov. 4, 1888, Seventh-day Adventist Year Book (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1889), 58.

³W. C. White to M. K. White, Nov. 3, 1888, in MMM, 123; E. G. White to M. K. White, Nov. 4, 1888, EGWRC-AU.

disagreements or that she would always affirm the accuracy of his representation of her positions, but it does indicate how well he knew her, the degree of confidence she had in him, and how harmoniously they could work together.

From Jonah to Acting Captain

Resolutions from the final days of the conference reflect the unsettled state of affairs on the executive committee in view of the fact that president-elect O. A. Olsen would need several months to close his work in Scandinavia and return to the United States to assume new responsibilities. The same day that Olsen was elected (Wednesday, October 31), White was elected foreign mission secretary and one of seven members of the executive committee. The following day D. T. Jones was appointed to "assist the acting president of the General Conference in his correspondence and in his labors in the interests of the cause at large," but there was still no mention of who would be the acting president. It was evidently assumed that S. N. Haskell, second-ranking member of the executive committee and chairman pro tem of the Minneapolis session, would be the one.¹

By Monday, November 19, however, the committee had been decimated by illness and resignations. White reported to his wife that "Butler has withdrawn" from the committee, "Haskell has gone home sick," and "Smith has resigned, saying that he is not fitted for the work, either by nature or by grace." The result was that while W. C. White was "detained" for "half an hour," counseling with his mother "about the publication of Testimony No. 33," the committee voted to make him acting president. That night he informed his wife that "much against my will, they have made me chairman" of the executive committee "till Elder Olsen comes." The

¹"Thirteenth Day's Proceedings," GCB, Nov. 1, 1888, 1; "Thirteenth Day's Proceedings [continued]," GCB, Nov. 2, 1888, 2; "Fourteenth Day's Proceedings," GCB, Nov. 2, 1888, 3; "First Day's Proceedings," GCB, Oct. 19, 1888, 1.

new responsibility greatly increased White's work load. He told Mary five days later that his election to the acting presidency was "about the bitterest pill that I have had to take." "It seems," he continued, "as though some of us have been taking pills ever since we set foot on Minneapolis soil; but I saw no way to get out of it."¹

When, despite an "earnest effort," White could not induce the committee to "rescind the motion" that had made him acting president, he immediately began to delegate responsibilities. Agreeing to handle the foreign correspondence himself (since he was the foreign mission secretary), he assigned the American correspondence to D. T. Jones. He also proposed "the appointment of various members of the committee for different sections of the country as counselors,"² a decision that proved to be the first step toward decentralizing General Conference governance by the formation of union conferences.

White attributed this idea to Ellen White. "Mother has told me," he explained to Olsen,

that it has been shown her that it would be more pleasing to God and for the advancement of the cause, if men should be chosen to take charge of the work in various division[s] of the country, each one acting freely in his field, not refer[r]ing all questions to one man. . . . Then she says these men should meet together frequently for consultation and the formation of plans, all meet[ing] as equals, each expressing freely his views and lis[t]ening with respect to the views of others.³

White's own assessment of this proposal was that "it really seems that we must adopt some such plan as this[,] for our work is certainly too broad for any one or

¹W. C. White to M. K. White, Nov. 19, Nov. 24, 1888, in MMM, 124, 126; W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Nov. 27, 1888, in MMM, 128-132; cf. Dan T. Jones, "The General Conference," RH, Nov. 27, 1888, 749.

²W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Nov. 27, 1888, in MMM, 128-132.

³Ibid.

two men to understand and manage, in all its detail." He then reassured Olsen that he was not intending to preempt the judgment of the president-elect. "Of course I do not want to move rashly and make a distribution of labor that would not meet your judgment, or your plans, so it is tacitly understood that the arrangements made during your absence are subject to change when you come."¹

It is reasonable to believe that White was completely sincere in crediting his mother as the source of his administrative innovations. To contend the opposite, that her agreement with his policies was the result of his persuasive influence with her, fails on several counts. One evidence that White was truly reflecting his mother's views and not just making the claim in order to enhance his own influence is seen in his humble attitude toward Olsen's preferences. He gives no hint of "You'd better do it this way or you'll be rejecting the counsel of God," as one might expect if he were merely claiming her support in order to enhance his own influence.

A second evidence is the close resemblance between this policy and her later counsels favoring decentralization, particularly the statement about "no one man" serving as president, that became such a point of debate between 1897 and 1903.²

A third evidence is her expressed approval of his administration. She wrote to Mary in the spring of 1889,

Willie is in meeting early and late, devising, planning for the doing better and more efficient work in the cause of God. . . .

. . . Willie is doing a very excellent work in arranging and calculating the general work for the cause, and if the work does not move more smoothly and with better success it will not be because Willie has not done his best. . . . I

¹Ibid., 132.

²E. G. White to Conference Presidents and Counselors, Aug. 1896 (Letter 24a, 1896), EGWRC-AU; Oliver, SDA Organizational Structure, 184-201, 298-99, 337.

tell you, Mary, good, solid work is being done that ought to have been done years ago. Everything has been left in a loose, haphazard condition and there needs to be a thorough remodeling of plans and ways of working. . . . I will trust in the Lord that He will give Willie a large measure of His grace.

The working of business connected with the cause of God is in a very much better condition than when we first came to Battle Creek. We pray the Lord to continue the good work begun.¹

To turn this argument on its head and contend that her public and private support for his administrative policies was the result of his persuasive influence would seriously overestimate his assertiveness and underestimate her stubborn independence. In early 1889, when this letter was written, he was thirty-four and she was sixty-one. The documentary evidence offers no support for a suggestion that she was taking a back seat to her younger son.

Mother's Representative on the General Conference Committee, 1889-1891

With the successful implementation of administrative improvements as acting president, and buttressed by the endorsement of Ellen White, it might be assumed that W. C. White's position in the Battle Creek administration was secure. The strains that had originated at Minneapolis, however, were still present. Powerful General Conference committee members still believed W. C. White was primarily to blame for the schism at Minneapolis, and they strongly resented his continuing support for the positions his mother had taken there. They also continued to distrust the part she had played at Minneapolis and to believe that she had been "used" by W. C. White "to give power and influence" to his positions. Despite confessions by some leading individuals, several top administrators in Battle Creek (including D. T. Jones, who worked closely with W. C. White) were still

¹E. G. White to M. K. White, [Mar. 1889], Letter 64a, 1889, EGWRC-AU, emphasis added.

holding these views in the spring of 1890.¹

When the breakthrough over the Minneapolis problem came in Battle Creek, W. C. White was far to the west in Colorado with Mary, as noted earlier. As he pondered his isolation from headquarters and separation from his mother, he became convinced that this was ordered by "providence" in order to "free the work from the suspicion which attached" to him and give him a "chance to prepare for a different kind of labor." He evidently believed that his effectiveness as a General Conference administrator was at an end. But "the saddest thought" to him, he wrote, was that "it is necessary for me to separate from mother, that the suspicions which have gathered about me" may not "be attached to her work." He spoke of "the truth which has been forcing itself upon me during the past winter, that I must separate from her in order that her testimony may be believed."²

He had been proceeding, therefore, with arrangements "to transfer the management of her business to other hands," and in this he had "succeeded to a considerable degree." "I pray most earnestly," he wrote to D. T. Jones,

that the time may come that our brethren will appreciate the fact that my zeal for the work, and my fertility of plans, is because of my connection with mother, and because of what I have learned from her, as to the manner and spirit in which our work should be conducted. I have regarded the information that I have gained by this connection with mother as a sacred trust that must be used for the advancement of the work, and Oh, I regret so much that self has been allowed to appear, and cause a blight over all. But I accept the present situation, and pray that God will help me to learn well the lesson he is teaching, for I do not want to see his precious Cause, his glorious work, marred by my imperfection and lack of consecration.³

The context and expressions of the passage support the evident sincerity of his concern that his mother's influence was more important than his own. While he

¹D. T. Jones to W. C. White, Mar. 18, 1890, in MMM, 158-163.

²W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 171-72.

³*Ibid.*

regretted that he himself had been so badly misunderstood, his primary concern was that his mother's influence and the progress of the "Cause" not be injured by the suspicions attached to him.

Following Mary's death on June 18, 1890, W. C. White resumed his work at headquarters. Ellen White had moved north to Petoskey, Michigan, from where she repeatedly begged Willie to spend a few days with her. Typical of his replies is the following:

I would like very much to come and see you, and perhaps I can after two or three weeks, but it would be torture for me to lose a day just now. My work is in sad shape. I have failed to get any word to the br[ethre]n at the Swiss camp-meeting, because of my going to Chautauqua [New York], and they are scoring me on every side for neglect of duty. I must work now, and catch up with my work, and then I shall have better health, and courage.

. . . I wish I could go berrying with you, but that is not among the possibles at present. Yours in great haste, W. C. White.¹

By the spring of 1891 it had become evident to Ellen White that despite professions of change, things were not a great deal different at headquarters. A letter she wrote to O. A. Olsen constitutes an exposé of then-current conditions on the General Conference executive committee, and a further evidence that, whatever anyone else might think, Ellen White had complete confidence in the integrity of W. C. White. Whoever doubted his trustworthiness would be at odds with her.²

The main point of the letter is that Olsen should "break up this ring at the office" by sending D. T. Jones to Walla Walla, Washington. She also mentions that while she would like to have W. C. White as her full-time assistant, it is more important for him at present to retain his position in the inner circle of the General Conference because he brings to his work and correspondence "a heart full of sympathy," and because he is a faithful "voice" for the "instructions" that come

¹W. C. White to E. G. White, Aug. 18, 1890, LB C, 58-60, EGWRC-AU.

²E. G. White to O. A. Olsen, Mar. 30, 1891, EGWRC-AU.

from her. The letter is of sufficient interest to warrant quoting at length. She assures Olsen that D. T. Jones, Captain Eldridge, and A. R. Henry,

have, in their plans and councils, felt that WCW stood in their way from bringing about certain things, and they have talked the matter over to not open their matters to him because he is so closely connected with me.

Dan Jones, Eldridge, and A. R. Henry do not believe in the testimonies. I know whereof I speak. They have a power, but Dan Jones is THE great instigator. I have heard him talk in reference to WCW. They think he informs me of things going on among them. Very hard speeches have been made in reference to my work, for I have been made to hear them. Now, if you can set Dan Jones for his health in Walla Walla, Washington, to look after the interest of the school, you will make a decided change in [the] Battle Creek office.

In regard to my talk with you in reference to WCW's giving his whole time to me, I think it not best for him to leave Battle Creek. When my writing on [the] Life of Christ is pretty well advanced, as I mean it shall be, then he will be able to do a day's work or two days' work in examining the matter. Until my finances shall improve, I cannot pay anyone large wages, and WCW has an interest in the work. He has a heart full of sympathy, and he brings tenderness into the letters which he writes, and he calls out letters of like character. But there is a determined effort on the part of this confederacy at the office to manage so that WCW's voice shall not have influence. He voices his mother's instructions from Heaven too closely to suit their ideas. . . .

I can manage the coming year as I have done the past years, and will not call for WCW, for I know you need him. I have been shown [that] the design is to disconnect their work from me, and they think they will then be untrammelled to work on according to their plans. God forbid! God forbid! is my prayer. . . .

Secure WCW a good, efficient man to help him. He is devoted to the work. His heart and prayers and Christlike sympathies are interwoven with the work. And Satan is moving in a secret, underhanded manner to separate all who have connection with me and my work, from the great whole. They have no need of me. They think [that] if Sister White were only out of the way, they could do a wonderful thing. I write these things to you because you must know them and act in reference to them. The men in the office are not converted men.

If they do not carry their plans to completion this time, they do not give them up by any means. They will try again.¹

The last two paragraphs, particularly, are premonitory of the decision taken five months later to send both Ellen White and W. C. White to Australia. By August the committee had voted it, and Ellen White, after a great deal of prayer and questioning on the topic, eventually accepted the call. The years in Australia would

¹Ibid., emphasis added.

be momentous ones during which W. C. White would greatly add to his administrative experience. Yet the evidence is convincing that he wrote the truth when he assured his colleague, Dan T. Jones, that "my zeal for the work, and my fertility of plans, is because of my connection with my mother, and because of what I have learned from her."¹

The interaction between W. C. White and Ellen G. White regarding organizational innovations had to do, of course, not with laying the basic foundations of Seventh-day Adventist denominational structure, but with making some timely adaptations to meet the needs of a growing church. Andrew Mustard has shown that Seventh-day Adventist "church order" as originated in 1863 followed closely "in several respects" the basic forms and terminology of Methodism in its American form.²

W. C. White as Editor

Like his father before him, W. C. White was early entrusted with editorial responsibilities. To make editorial suggestions concerning her manuscripts before publication, Ellen White also called on non-family members, such as Uriah Smith.³ Although the same pattern prevailed during the period 1881 to 1891, W. C. White's responsibilities were greatly expanded.

Ellen White's Editorial Staff

W. C. White acted as the general supervisor of Ellen White's editorial

¹W. C. White to E. G. White, July 15, 1891, LB 2A, 536-37; W. C. White to Mary C. Mortenson, Aug. 12, 1891, LB 2A, 672-73, EGWRC-AU; A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 4:15-16, 31-32, 39, 257-59; W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 172.

²Mustard, James White and SDA Organization, 252, 258-60.

³See above, chap. 1, "Observation of Her Work."