

# Ellen White: Mother of the Church in the South Pacific

by Arthur Patrick

Historians face an ongoing challenge with reference to Ellen White. She was adopted and loved as the mother of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the vast area of the world known as the South Pacific Division,<sup>1</sup> in spite of cogent reasons why this was unlikely to have occurred. The time has come to analyse this relationship between Ellen White and the church more thoroughly.

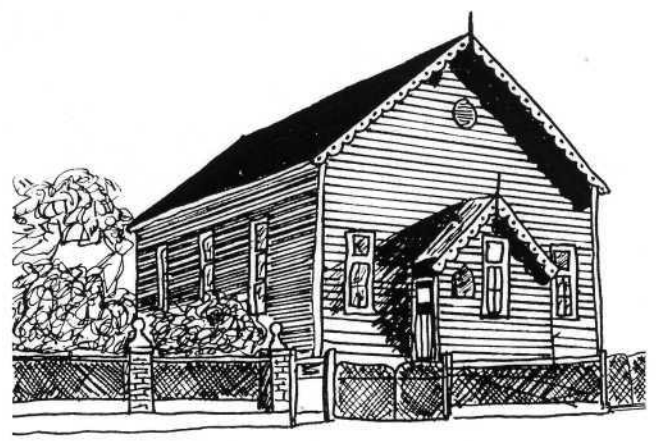
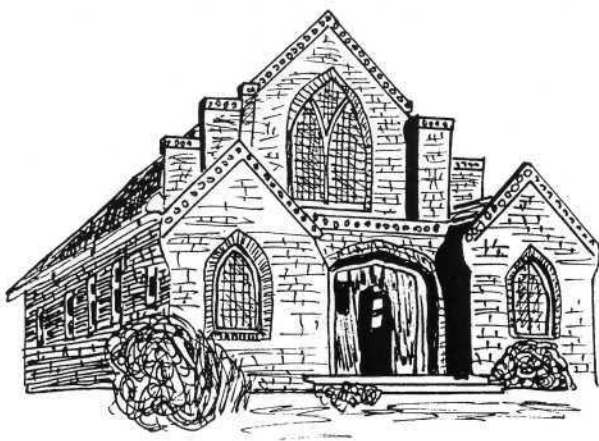
Although competent historians are careful about making judgments close to an event, or soon after a person's death, it is now more than a hundred years since the widowed Ellen White (1827-1915) entered the territory of the South Pacific Division on November 27, 1891. On that day the *S.S. Alameda* paused at Apia, where friendly Samoans brought canoe-loads of tropical fruits, shells, coral and handcrafts alongside. On December 3 and 4 the ship berthed at Auckland, New Zealand, facilitating the first visit between the best-known of the church's founders and antipodean Adventists. When the *Alameda* sailed into "the most beautiful harbour in the world" [Sydney, New South Wales] on December 8, Ellen White quickly recognised

two North American missionaries on the wharf, Arthur and Mary Daniells, friends from the Whites' time in Texas. Contrary to her earlier plans, it was almost nine years later when Ellen White boarded the *S.S. Moana* for the voyage back to her homeland, where she remained until her death on July 16, 1915.<sup>2</sup>

A number of observations about Ellen White can be made without fear of contradiction. Articles in reference works and the content of numerous theses written for universities in widely-separated countries demonstrate beyond all question that she is a person who merits serious study.<sup>3</sup> One eighth (105 months) of her 70-year public ministry was spent in Australia and New Zealand, a segment of overseas service long enough to call for careful assessment. Sufficient time has elapsed since her South Pacific sojourn and her death for coherent historical analysis to occur. More than that, the primary sources are abundant. When in 1972 the General Conference moved to establish a headquarters archive and then a string of Ellen G. White/Seventh-day Adventist Research Centres around the world, it facilitated better access



*Ellen G. White, circa 1890s, as she looked during her years in Australia*



**Top left:** The first SDA church in Parramatta, a wooden structure built in only 5 1/2 weeks. The dedication, on December 10, 1892, followed an evangelistic campaign led by Robert Hare and David Steed. **Top right:** The second church in Parramatta took three months to build and was dedicated on March 7, 1937. **Bottom:** The third church took 18 months to complete and was dedicated on 14 May, 1988.

to a significant body of primary documents. The Research Centre for the South Pacific Division opened in a five-room section of the Avondale College Library on 22 February 1976. Since then a great deal of serious investigation has been undertaken.

This more ready access to the church's memory-bank has sharpened the problem for the historians. Although researchers now have many more facts to assemble, the essential data is increasingly beyond dispute. The far more demanding task is to construct interpretations which accord with all of the facts and which satisfy the variety of groupings which have developed in the church.<sup>4</sup> Only as consensus is achieved can the church move on coherently with its mission. Five of the

arguments which are least in dispute are as follows:

### Five Roadblocks to Success

1. Ellen White lived as an American in a British Colony [Australia] during most of the years 1891-1900, except for the year 1893 when she ministered in another British Colony [New Zealand]. Prizing their Scottish, Irish, Welsh, and English heritage, the most ardent Protestants in both countries tended to distrust the nation which had developed from the rebel colonies on the far side of the Atlantic. The Wesleyans, for instance, were in many respects theologically nearest to the Adventists. They were confident that as a nation, however, Great Britain epitomised God's ideals and that the Adventists were a regrettable and

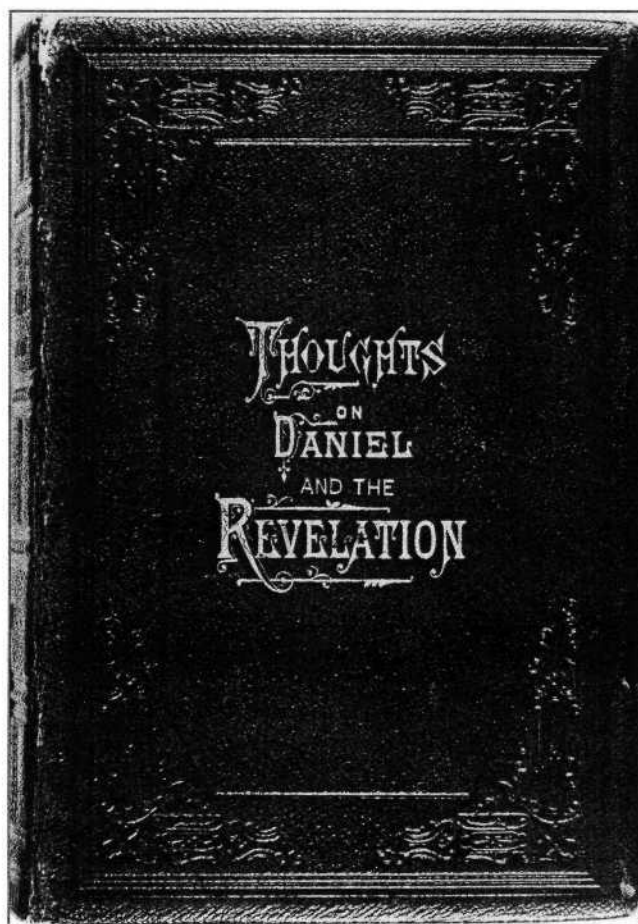
annoying incursion from the United States.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that North American Christianity had some impact upon the religious life of Australasians during the nineteenth century. But, to be readily accepted in the religious climate of the 1890s, Ellen White should have come to the South Pacific with a British accent.

2. Even more importantly, Ellen White was a woman. Most females in nineteenth-century Australia knew their place and kept in it. The home was their sphere, not places where important decisions were made and implemented. Another Christian woman from overseas, Jessie Ackermann, made a noticeable impression in Australia during the years Ellen White was here, but her efforts were soon forgotten. If Ellen White was to influence significantly either the local Adventists or their society, she should have been born male.<sup>6</sup>

3. In 1891 Ellen White was well past 60, the age understood as normal for female retirement in Australia. Indeed, she marked her sixty-fourth anniversary on the day North Americans celebrated Thanksgiving, as the *Alameda* neared Samoa on its way from Honolulu. She returned to the United States in time for her seventy-third birthday. In her sixties and seventies, surely Ellen White should have been starting to relax rather than pressing ahead with some of the most ambitious projects of her entire career. Instead, she functioned in ways which led the church to adopt her as its *active mother*, not as a *retired grandmother*.

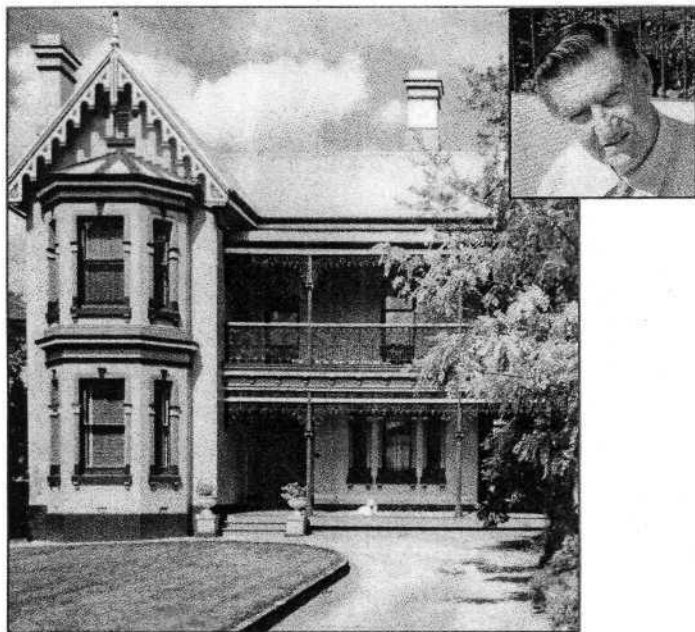
4. At times Ellen White suffered severe physical infirmity. During much of 1892 her right arm was so painful that she could move it only below the elbow, and write no more than a few lines a day. Sometimes she had to be carried to the pulpit, where she preached sitting down, an experience which she regarded as "quite a humiliation." An American female retiree in uncertain health would scarcely be chosen by any informed committee wanting to make a lasting impact in the lands "Down Under."

5. But Ellen White was beset by an even more serious problem: she came as a convinced pre-millennialist to a society in Australia which was



The cover for Uriah Smith's *Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation*, written in response to questions on prophecy. Colporteurs found it to be a popular seller.

actively opposed to such a religious stance. The Roman Catholics believed that Australia would soon become a new and greater Ireland. It was, they thought, a sort of "promised land" in which Irish saints and scholars would lead the church to recover the role which it had enjoyed in medieval Christendom. The Anglicans were led by an ardent archbishop committed to "Christianising" Australian society. Although a minority of them during the 1890s were seriously involved with eschatology, they held to a pre-millennialism which conflicted with the Adventist view. The Wesleyans were sure that their brand of Christianity was destined to succeed in the glorious federated nation which their eyes of faith foresaw. The secularists ridiculed the hopes of all three of these denominations, as they did the expectations fostered



Now restored, Norfolk Villa on Prospect Street, Harris Park, Sydney, was home to Mrs. White and her household from 1894-1895. In a letter to Dr. Kellogg dated October 25, 1894, she described it as "a pleasant and convenient house . . . [with] rooms [that] are light and airy." John Watson, (inset) an Adventist and member of the Parramatta and Granville Historical Societies, discovered Ellen White's Sydney home several years ago.

amongst the other segments of Christianity. The unbelievers also saved some of their harshest indictments for supernaturalists like those who proclaimed a cataclysmic Second Coming of Christ.<sup>7</sup>

The list of historical reasons why Ellen White's sojourn in the South Pacific should have been a non-event could readily be extended. But she transcended the disadvantages which beset her, and bonded quickly with the 500 believers in Australia and New Zealand. More importantly, as the small Adventist membership was multiplied by five during her stay, she devel-



"Sunnyside," Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia. Always restless for country life, Ellen White purchased a property close to the site chosen for Avondale. She lived here from December 25, 1895 until August, 1900, when she returned to the U.S.

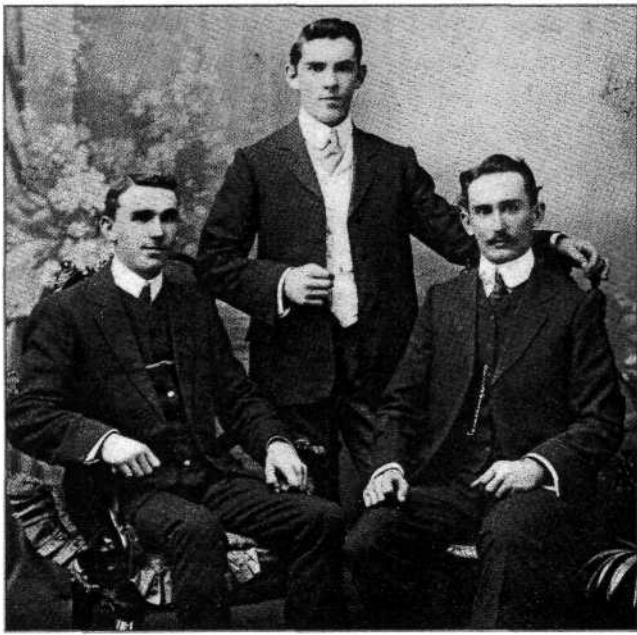
oped a strong relationship with these new believers. Thus she came to influence the infant church as a mother does a young child. Along with the many positive results of these circumstances was a problematical one: the Australasian church became highly dependant upon her. She gave us such certainty during the decades of our spiritual adolescence that we tended to overlook the implications of some of her plainest counsels. We learned by heart many choice statements, amongst them this gem from *Education*: "Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do."<sup>8</sup> Too often, however, we expected Ellen White to tell us what to think, and even to read the Scriptures for us. By contrast, she intended us to become responsible adults, in a spiritual sense.

### An Inevitable Crisis

Inevitably, therefore, a crisis would occur at some time. There were local difficulties in the early-1930s when a respected leader, W.W. Fletcher left the church. During the mid-1950s a conference president (R.A. Greive) and a number of his ministers departed over issues similar to those raised by Fletcher. Beginning in reaction to Greive, Robert Brinsmead throughout the 1960s led a faction which criticised the church severely. Then

Brinsmead changed his theological stance, criticizing the church from an opposite vantage point during the 1970s. By the early 1980s, Brinsmead's changing ideas took him outside of Adventism and then beyond the parameters of evangelical Christianity.

These stirrings caused serious stresses in the church, but until about 1970 the problems



The three Patrick sons, left to right: Charles, William, and Sydney. As lads they knew first-hand the kindness of their neighbor, Ellen White.

could always be parried or contained by an appeal to the authority of Ellen White. Thereafter the situation altered rapidly. Her long-established role was challenged incipiently early in the 1970s; it was attacked overtly before the decade closed.

### The New Conflagration

This time the assault came on multiple fronts. The standard issue for most Adventists had been simply "What does Ellen White say?" During the 1970s it became principally "What is Ellen White's authority?" Instead of questions about whether cheese should be on Adventist tables and whether Adventists should vote, there was discussion about the historical substance of *The Great Controversy*. Then came the disturbing book by Ron Numbers (*Ellen G. White: Prophetess of Health*) which raised questions about her writings on health reform. Next came disquieting rumours that Walter Rea, a pastor in California, was charging Ellen White with the extensive use of unacknowledged literary sources. Even more perplexing, Robert Brinsmead was on the intellectual pendulum-swing which denied all he had earlier affirmed about Ellen

White. His doubts were even on the lips of many who were not his followers.

So, late in the 1970s, the church was forced to draw increasingly on the arsenal of trusted weapons it had long prized for settling skirmishes. But, so strong was the current of change in the Adventist community, its well-used methods were less effective than they had been formerly.

Given these circumstances, only a spark was needed to ignite a conflagration. California and Australia are both subject to the effects of wildfire; a theological spark in the former was to ignite an inferno in the latter. At a critical moment a *serious biblical question* was posed by Desmond Ford in California on October 27, 1979. Almost immediately the Australasian church gave what seemed to be an official response when a *considered Ellen White answer* appeared in the Division paper on December 10.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps, had she been present to ask, Ellen White's response may have been to repeat her last words at a General Conference, "I commend to you the Word of God." In any case, the South Pacific church saw its relationship with its mother imperiled as she was drawn to the centre of its controversy.

Understandably, neither the rank-and-file nor the church's leaders welcomed the difficult challenge to redraw the officially-accepted portrait of Ellen White. Yet this process was made necessary by the long accumulation of folk-lore, the perplexing questions posed by people critical of the church, and the sudden availability of primary sources.



Arthur G. and Mary Daniells



W.C. White and his Australian wife in 1896. Seated: Ethel May and Willie White, holding the twins. Standing: Mabel, age 10, and Ella, age 14.

Indeed, many Adventists were psychologically unready to acknowledge the godly but fallible prophet who had been well known to earlier leaders like A.G. Daniells and W.W. Prescott. They much preferred the Ellen White of J.S. Washburn, or that of A.T. Jones before his apostasy. Their illusions, however, were confronted by massive disquieting evidence which did not fit within the long-cherished rubrics.<sup>10</sup> This was the age of international ham radio operators and jet aircraft and photocopiers; never before could rumour and reality spread so quickly through the church.

The smoke from that conflagration has been dissipating for a decade. It is already clear that three options were preferred. Some of the truest believers steeled themselves against the new evidence about Ellen White and retreated into a ghetto of denial, sometimes reverting to sectarian positions which projected Adventism as a cult. A significant group rejected Ellen White; some of these also repudiated the Seventh-day Adventist Church or even Christianity itself. But, for others, a long process involving the constructive transformation of ideas seemed imperative. So the question posed at the outset of this article has now developed two dimensions. Why was Ellen White so enthusiastically accepted during and after her nine years in Australasia? Why has she demonstrated such resilience during the recent crisis?

## A Dual Bias

Before I list my set of answers, let me confess to a dual bias. Early in their Adventist experience my maternal grandparents, John and Charlotte Pocock, came to know Ellen White. They evangelized their neighbours enthusiastically and successfully with her books. Their English independence was overwhelmed by her kindness. She gave them clothes for their children when, during a time of financial depression, John lost his employment because he kept the seventh-day Sabbath. John lived in "Sunnyside" for months as one of Ellen White's family of helpers. Later she invited him to move with his family to Cooranbong to work at the fledgling institution which would become Avondale College. There she lent him a tent to live in while he built a home, and a cow so his young family could be nourished with milk. He heard her sing favourite hymns while she raked leaves in the grounds of "Sunnyside", and he was deeply moved as she prayed in the family circle and preached in the Avondale church. Until his death in 1946 he believed intensely that Ellen White's life was a powerful witness to the integrity of the message which she professed.<sup>11</sup>

My widowed paternal grandmother shared a similar experience. After being nurtured in the faith by A.G. Daniells, Amelia Patrick met Ellen White at the 1898 Brisbane campmeeting. Encouraged by Ellen White to move to Cooranbong with her three boys, Amelia came to know the lifestyle and attitudes of the church's mother at first hand. At Cooranbong, Amelia's three small sons once found a destitute man sheltering under the Dora Creek bridge. The boys ran home and brought the man their entire Sabbath treat—a whole egg from each lad. When Ellen White heard the story, she sent a basket of eggs to the widow's cottage. Amelia experienced a pervasive sense of peace as she read *The Great Controversy* and listened to Ellen White's talks at Avondale. So, from both sides of my family I grew up with a strong emotional—perhaps even sentimental—attachment to Ellen White.

My other bias derives from long years trying to understand Australian history, with the help of The University of New England in Armidale and then The University of Newcastle, an institution within easy driving distance of Avondale College. Most Australian historians are known to be skeptics rather than believers. Those who are Christians, like all historians, are trained to thoroughly question their assumptions. My current conclusions about Ellen White have been honed by a long dialogue between family sentiment and historical method. So why did this diminutive lady become so endeared to South Pacific Adventists?



The Pocock sisters, May (standing, b. 1900) and Bertha (b. 1902). May was a graduate of Sydney Sanitarium and married to Pastor E.L. Minchin. Bertha married William Patrick and operated a horse-drawn taxi service between Coorabong and the train stations at Dora Creek and Morriset. Both the Pocock and Patrick families grew close to the White family in Coorabong.

### Reasons for Success

1. Ellen White epitomised *the truth*, that is, *the message*. We are a people caught by the significance of “the blessed hope” and “the third angel’s message.” We knew before she arrived that Ellen White was a first-generation Adventist, a participant in the sacred pain of our birth as a movement, an eyewitness of what God did in those formative years, a co-founder of the church, and a person equipped to speak to us prophetically as no one else could do. Thus she was accepted by the Australian church as a symbol of Adventism *par excellence*.<sup>12</sup>

2. Ellen White identified with the ordinary people who had heeded the extraordinary Adventist message. She was a *practical* prophetess who was interested in growing vegetables, fruit and flowers; who was willing to surrender the heads of

her chickens so broth could be made to sustain a family too prejudiced to eat “Adventist” food; who trained cows to stand while being milked rather than adopting the “barbarous practice” of the Australians—confining the cow’s head in a bail and tying its leg with a rope. Ellen White was the sort of down-to-earth woman who appealed to the people of an emerging nation still dominated by frontier attitudes.<sup>13</sup>

3. Ellen White fostered a set of compelling ideas amongst her contemporaries. These were value-centred, involving such issues as “true” education, health reform, health care and witnessing with literature. They were concepts big enough to stir the imagination of pioneer Adventists, to cause them to dig deeply into their pockets and to

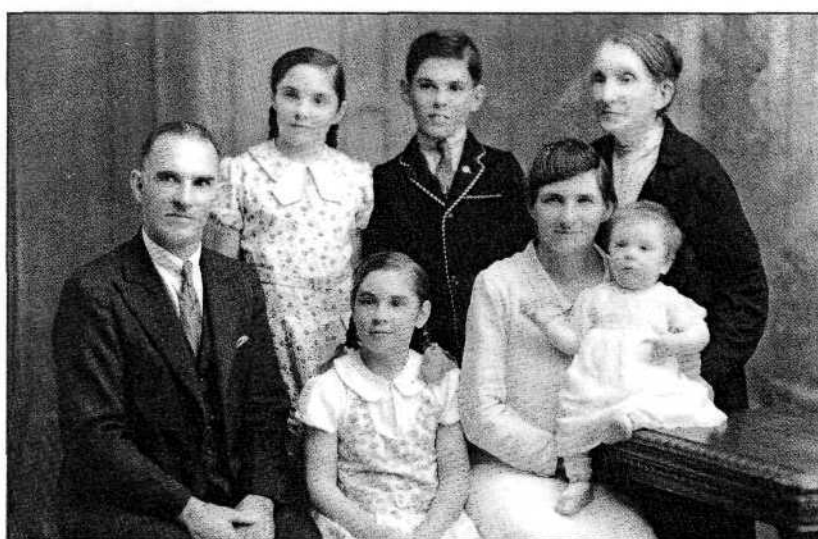
perspire freely as they built structures which would grow and multiply and become impressive institutions like Avondale College, the Sanitarium Health Food Company, Sydney Adventist Hospital, and the Signs Publishing Company. This recognition of Ellen White as a powerful source of motivation, however, must not be allowed to diminish the significance of other stalwarts: Stephen Haskell, Arthur Daniells, and “Willie” White amongst them. But some of the principal ideas which she emphasised, when combined with the sacrifice and toil of others, developed the visible face of the church in Australasia. Timber and bricks and concrete came to portray something of what it meant

to be a Seventh-day Adventist.<sup>14</sup> Thus institutions became enduring reminders of Ellen White and her ministry.

4. Ellen White was a warm-hearted evangelical Christian.<sup>15</sup> The names of four of the books published during her Australian years suggest her central focus during the 1890s: *Steps to Christ*, 1892; *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 1896; *The Desire of Ages*, 1898; *Christ's Object Lessons*, 1900. Perhaps Adventists' lives have been shaped by *The Desire of Ages* more than by any other influence outside the Scriptures. Together these volumes brought us face-to-face with Christ our Saviour, and gave us a pervasive sense of gratitude to their author.

5. A fifth reason gathers up these others and gives them potency. In her life, in her frequent talks and sermons, as in her copious writings, Ellen White was accepted by the pioneer Adventists of Australia and New Zealand as a spiritually-gifted person. The church listened to her because her testimony carried convincing credentials. The core of the matter can be put very simply; Jesus, God incarnate, died for us, rose and ascended. From that time He has showered spiritual gifts upon His people to equip them to continue His ministry (Ephesians 4: 8, 11-14). Moreover, those gifts are poured out upon old and young, male and female (Joel 2:28). The fact that Ellen White was a spiritually-gifted person who focused on "the truth as it is in Jesus" was far more significant to the young church than any of the disadvantages (nationality, gender, age, and infirmity) which beset her.<sup>16</sup>

These five reasons remain as compelling in the 1990s as they were during the 1890s, but in the interim we had created a problem for ourselves. Over time we had constructed an Ellen White who met our needs as we perceived them,<sup>17</sup> a person different from the flesh-and-blood individual who lived amongst us from 1891-1900.



*The William N. Patrick family circa 1934-35.  
Seated left to right: Will Patrick, Alice, Bertha Pocock-Patrick, and Baby Arthur. Standing left to right: Ivy, Joseph, and Mrs. Wanzlich.*

### Implications for Today

In short hindsight, the questions raised about Ellen White since the 1970s seem to be crucial for her continuing influence in the church throughout the South Pacific Division. Because we were not ready for them, however, they wreaked severe damage amongst us. Yet these discussions brought into the open a large quantity of data previously unknown even to serious students of Ellen White's life and writings.

By early 1982, when the first International Prophetic Guidance Workshop convened at the church's world headquarters, it was as though a huge box of new information cards had been dumped on the church's corporate desk. These cards required careful sorting and interpretation, a process which continues to be on the church's agenda for the immediate future.<sup>18</sup> Many in the church experienced a form of bereavement due to the loss of their long-held and cherished concept of an all-knowing and ever-authoritative Ellen White, and the consequent removal of a pervasive yet valued source of ultimate control over both their personal lives and the church. All the classic symptoms of grief were painfully evident in the church, includ-



ing the frustrations of denial, anger, and depression.<sup>19</sup>

Our lethargy in creating a coherent alternative to the traditional picture of Ellen White has prolonged the problems associated with this bereavement. There was an urgent need for sensitive pastoral support to be given to ministers, teachers and members. But some of those leading the church were themselves in a process of bereavement. Also, it was difficult to quickly grasp the implications of the evidence and to give constructive leadership in the discovery and adoption of viable new patterns of thought. Thus the two extreme responses flourished. First, *Reversion*, implied that the new research and discussions raised questions which should not be asked, and thus all such investigations should be prevented or discontinued. Second, *Rejection*, the other extreme response, claimed that the new evidence exposed Ellen White and her ministry as a great deception, a cause for disregarding her writings or leaving the church entirely.

The response with enduring viability, *Transformation*, often seemed too difficult or too terrifying to attempt,<sup>20</sup> since it called for a comprehensive reassessment of Adventism in general and Ellen White in particular. Essentially it is the church's constant task, for every generation must reformulate its religious tradition for itself if it is to adequately "own" its faith.

One of the greatest challenges which the church faces in the 1990s is in the attitude of the present generation of young Adventists, especially those who have grown up estranged from the church's mother. Step-by-step the church is formulating a comprehensive new picture of Ellen White and her ministry.<sup>21</sup> Recently this author suggested, to an interdepartmental consultation at the South Pacific Division headquarters, some of the issues which invite greater emphasis.<sup>22</sup> They are quoted here in the language of their delivery.

\**The link between cosmology and eschatology*, first things and last things. The doctrine of creation has powerful environmental implications. Prophetess though she was, with a compelling sense of mission, Ellen White

exemplified a mature delight in the entire world of nature, even to pansies, peaches and potatoes. A recovery of her comprehensive interest in this theme would speak powerfully to our age.

\**The link between health and religion*, spiritual and physical well-being. We are currently allowing our culture to edge ahead of us in some aspects of this duality; to recover the authentic voice of Ellen White could make us the head and not the tail.

\**The interpretation of history*. Christianity is a teleological religion; it is directed toward a specific goal. All history is moving toward that end, and Ellen White can help us to discover and articulate the way in which the past reveals the purpose of God for the present and the future.

\**The primacy of Scripture* in the formation of doctrine. We have yet to fully implement Ellen White's counsel by making the Bible our sole rule of faith and practice.

\**The dynamic nature of Adventism*. We have not yet maximised the significance of our heritage. The *life and writings* of Ellen White are inextricably linked with the *history and thought* of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We are still in the early stages of making this relationship understood in the church.<sup>23</sup>

\**The winsomeness of God*. In my first wide-margin Bible there are copious notes made with a mapping pen in Indian ink, detailing the way in which Ellen White's writings on the life of Christ assist our understanding of the four Gospels. Were there two demoniacs or one at Gadara? What was the sequence of the events in the life of Jesus? Did this miracle occur on the way *into* or the way *out of* Jericho? I asked countless questions on that level, some of which are quite irrelevant in the light of now well-known facts.<sup>24</sup> I now believe that the essential theme of *The Desire of Ages* is clearly stated on page 22: Jesus came to reveal to us the God whom to know is to love. Some of the questions which I asked of this masterpiece were no doubt important, but too many of them were outside of its purpose or what could be expected of it.

\**The ultimacy of Jesus Christ*. Probably most of us have not yet been able to fully implement Ellen White's far-reaching injunction that "of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world."<sup>25</sup>

While such a list could be expanded readily, these suggestions give a hint at the avenues inviting fuller exploration. How will historians of the future write about Ellen White's role in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific Division during the last two decades of the twenti-

pp. 16-18. It must be stressed that Ellen White sought advice about agricultural methods from local people who demonstrated knowledge and experience. She also employed Iram James to supervise the work in her garden, orchard, and farmlet.

14. The current research by Dr. Glynn Litster is demonstrating the role which others (like William C. White) had as they implemented ideas which Ellen White long fostered (like the importance of health foods). The founding of institutions was a group effort, but without the motivation provided by Ellen White the outcome would have been quite different.

15. See my article, "An Adventist and an Evangelical in Australia: The Case of Ellen White in the 1890s," *Lucas: An Evangelical History Review*, No. 12 (December 1991), pp. 42-53. Some would prefer to describe Ellen White as "a Christ-centered Christian" rather than as "an evangelical Christian." Both terms are appropriate; the term "evangelical" is useful in view of the current research into Australian evangelicalism. The scholars engaged in this study prefer an inclusive definition of the term. They are near to the publication of two volumes, a dictionary of evangelical biography and a history of evangelicalism.

16. In his review of this article, John Gate says: "The way we interpret Ellen White's writings will determine largely what kind of picture we end up with; and the way we interpret Ellen White's writings is largely determined by the way we appreciate the way she received her information." Thus Gate emphasizes the importance of both the doctrine of inspiration and biblical authority. Letter, Gate to Patrick, 14 December 1992.

17. The church through twenty centuries has constantly done this with Jesus of Nazareth. See Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985).

18. Roy Adams' recent discussion of Ellen White's writings as "canonical" raised painful memories amongst South Pacific Adventists. See "A Prophet for Our Time," *Adventist Review*, 4 June 1992, pp. 8-11.

19. Some participants in the historical events question the appropriateness of bereavement as a symbol of the church's experience. It may be that a range of models will be necessary to adequately portray the events which took place.

20. Fritz Guy has cogently outlined the procedures which facilitate the process of transformation. See his unpublished paper, "The Future of Adventist Theology: A Personal View" (Berrien Springs: Andrews University, 1980). Cf. Beverly Flanigan's use of the term "transformed outlook" in "Forgiving the Unforgivable," *Psychology Today*, September/October 1992, p. 92.

21. In planning a video to highlight the centenary of Ellen White's arrival in the South Pacific, it was

decided to aim the production at this group rather than the older generation in the church. The result is the Adventist Media Centre production entitled "One Hundred Year Recall," released in 1991.

22. The address entitled "Ellen White in the 1990s" is summarized in typescript, dated 15 June 1992.

23. Cf. my article, "Does Our Past Embarrass Us?" in *Ministry*, April 1991, pp. 7-10.

24. See Robert W. Olson, "How *The Desire of Ages* Was Written," 23 May 1979, a Shelf Document available from the Ellen G. White/SDA Research Centres. Note page 32 which shows that Ellen White did not claim to know the order of the events in the life of Christ.

25. *Evangelism As Set Forth in the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), p.

188. As we show other Christians the extent of Ellen White's agreement with cardinal Christian doctrines, they are usually more open to heed her distinctive convictions.

26. *Life Sketches* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1915), p. 196.

27. I wish to acknowledge the constructive comments made by a number of people after they had read drafts of this article, in particular Pastor John Gate, Dr. Milton Hook, Dr. Allan Lindsay, Dr. Trevor Lloyd, Dr. Robert McIver, Pastor Keith Parmenter, Dr. Lynden Rogers, Pastor John Shaw, and Pastor Ron Taylor. However, any interpretations stated or implied herein are my sole responsibility. It seems impossible to deal adequately with Ellen White's role as mother of the Australasian church without including the recent period. To interpret events which have occurred within the past two decades is to run the serious risk that one's conclusions will be revised with the passage of time; to fail to do so is to consign the church's mother to an undesirable limbo. I have, therefore, chosen the risk of being proved wrong, with the hope that creative discussion will be stimulated, enhancing Ellen White's future role in the South Pacific Division. It should be added that this article has only addressed the situation in the homelands of Australia and New Zealand; another article needs to explore her role in the Pacific Islands.