

“You are not alone in the work the Lord has chosen you to do. You will be taught of God how to bring the truth in its simplicity before the people. The God of truth will sustain you, and convincing proof will be given that He is leading you. God will give you of His Holy Spirit, and His grace, and wisdom and keeping power will be with you.” —*The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies to the Church*, p. 11

SEARCHING FOR —

Changes in the Testimonies

A friend recently phoned and said he had been told that the *Testimonies* had been changed, and therefore were no longer reliable. This was a person I considered almost as a son; for he had once been a teenager in a church I pastored a number of years ago.

The charge that the critics are making is this: “The *Testimonies* are full of changes,—and all those changes have radically changed its meaning. Those changes were made by evil men at the Review office. Ellen White may not have known what was happening.”

I have spoken with others who, because of this charge, are fearful to read the *Testimonies*. When I ask what is the evidence, they say there are supposed to be bad things written into the *Testimonies*, all through them, but they haven't found them yet.

In other research studies, I have prepared a sizeable amount of material validating the integrity of the Spirit of Prophecy writings. **In this present study, the changes in the *Testimonies* will be examined. We want to know what this is all about.**

As the Spirit of God guided her, Ellen White wrote many letters, counseling various individuals. Because those letters contained worthwhile information needed by many others, she was instructed to gather together her copies of these letters and have them printed. The first collection was published in 1855. Containing 16 pages, it was entitled, *Testimony for the Church*. Still more small booklets of testimonies were printed later. By 1882, 31 had been printed.

At Ellen's request, the printed copies of the first 30 of those testimonies (*Testimonies*, No. 1, *Testimonies*, No. 2, etc.) were carefully proofed by her trusted helpers: Marian Davis (who began helping her in 1878) and her son, William C. White (who began helping her as soon as James died in 1881). The plan was to prepare them for reprinting in *Testimonies for the Church*, Vols. 1 to 4.

Under Ellen's continual oversight, working in her own home, those corrections were made on the 30 *Testimony* booklets. No proofing and corrections were made at the offices of the Review. No printing house was ever permitted to do that. Only her own helpers, working in her home, were entrusted with that task. Ellen personally reviewed everything they did. When the task was completed, those testimonies were typeset at the Review; the galleys were proofed again by her helpers, and then *Testimonies for the Church*, Vols. 1-4, were printed. That was the preparatory procedure for all her printed books, from 1851 onward, including those after 1878.

***Testimonies*, No. 31 to 33, were also first published as booklets and then, later, as Vol. 5. All later testimonies were not first printed as booklets, but were directly**

printed in one of the volumes of the *Testimonies* (Vols. 6 to 9).

All of Ellen's printed materials (whether they be articles or books), prior to 1878, were proofed by James White; after that, Marian Davis and other trusted helpers performed this task.

TESTIMONIES, VOL. 1

As noted above, our present Vol. 1 of the *Testimonies* was published in 1885, and is a republication of *Testimonies*, No. 1-14. It consisted of small booklets first issued between 1855 and 1868.

In preparation for this present study, **I carefully analyzed *Testimonies*, Vol. 1, and found it to be filled with instruction, warnings, reproofs, and corrections.**

Vol. 1 is filled with instruction and rebuke; yet a comparison of the original *Testimonies*, No. 1-14, with our present Vol. 1 reveals no essential difference between the two!

This is significant since, if wicked men later really had changed the testimonies,—it would have been its high standards and reproofs of wrongdoing that they would have changed! Yet this was not done.

The *Testimonies* are filled with warnings and reproof. No wicked men have removed them! Here are examples of the type of material that Vol. 1 contains:

Leaving the Methodist Church, 35—The danger of relying on ministers and leaders.

Be Zealous and Repent, 141—Our church is worldly and needs to earnestly repent. The members are in terrible spiritual condition.

The Privilege and Duty of the Church, 178—Some in the church are living right, but many are lukewarm or cold.

The Shaking, 179—The chapter, also found in *Early Writings* (269-273), is about how few will go through to the end and be saved.

The Laodicean Church, 185—A strong testimony, pointing out of sin within the church.

Houses of Worship, 196—God's people are hoarding money to themselves and not giving to the forwarding of the work. / *Lessons from the Parables*, 197—Similar topics.

Errors in Diet, 204—Those in the church are not doing right, in regard to diet and other matters.

Slackness Reproved, 210—Wrongdoing by the people, including leaders and Review workers.

Fanaticism in Wisconsin, 228—Ministers and leaders in Wisconsin doing wrong and even leading out in fanaticism. / *Concealing Reproofs*, 233—Wrongdoing in New York State. / *The Cause in Ohio*, 234—Serious problems in Ohio.

Personal Experience, 244—Last part urges ministers to reprove wrongdoing, which they are not now doing.

Dangers and Duties of Ministers, 368—Some of our

ministers are slothful and not doing their work properly.

The Cause in the East, 409—Fanaticism among ministers and members in the northeast.

Unconsecrated Ministers, 438—Warning to our ministers not to be proud and conceited.

Our Ministers, 466—Our ministers need to be converted.

Sketch of Experience, 570—The coldness toward the Whites by a large number in Battle Creek.

Laborers in the Office, 585—A variety of wrong attitudes and actions by leaders and workers at the Review.

Conflicts and Victory, 592—How those at Battle Creek were mistreating James and Ellen.

Response from Battle Creek Church, 609—A statement written and signed by Uriah Smith and other Battle Creek leaders, expressing regret for what has happened and affirming their continued support for the Spirit of Prophecy.

Cutting and Slashing, 612—Strong testimony regarding slander against Ellen and James.

Publishing Personal Testimonies, 630—How people misuse her testimonies, but she determines to publish them anyway.

The Case of Hannah More, 666—A sad story of a convert who was so mistreated by everyone at Battle Creek that she left and died with non-Adventists.

In addition to the above, other chapters in Vol. 1 provide additional counsels, reproofs, and corrections on the following topics:

Parents, wives, young people, local church, business contracts, diet and health, tithing, the church name, care for the poor, stocks and speculation, honesty, slavery, church organization, philosophy, family religion, jealousy, dress standards, ministers' wives, patent rights, recreation, Sabbath observance, political involvement, lending and usury, the wealthy, life insurance, missionary work, literature distribution, amusements, improper cooking, and duties of husbands and wives.

—Yet in all that material, we find essentially little variation between the original *Testimonies, No. 1-14*, and our present *Testimonies, Vol. 1*. And that variation was the result of thoughtful decisions by Ellen White and her helpers.

A TYPICAL TWO PAGES OF VARIATIONS

Here are some samples of these variations between the original *Testimony* booklets and our present *Vol. 1*. They will show you the type of changes which were made.

First, we will look at a sample of what the variations look like. This is from the first two pages of variations in our *Vol. 1, p. 113:1* to the end of *115:0*. We will show the variants from that found in the original, which was *Testimonies, No. 1, p. 1:1* to the bottom of the next page (*end of 2:2*).

Vol. 1, p. 113:1—The location of “came” is changed in the sentence.

Vol. 1, p. 113:2—The original does not start a new paragraph, but continues on as part of para. 1. / “A mere theory” is in the original; in ours, it is “a mere theory of the truth.”

Vol. 1, p. 113:3—“The enemy is busy to destroy souls” in ours; “the enemy was busy to destroy souls” in the original. / “This must be laid aside” in ours; it is “It must be laid aside” in original.

Vol. 1, p. 114:2—“to their property. They flatter” from “to their property, and flatter.”

Vol. 1, p. 115:0—“By their example they say to those around them that” from “They set the example to those around them that.”

The above are all the changes in *Vol. 1, pp. 113:1 to the end of 115:0*, from the original booklet, which was *Testimonies, No. 1-10, pp. 1:1* to the end of the paragraph on *2:2*.

It is quite obvious that none of these changes are of any significance. The first sentence in the original was:

“November 20, 1855, while in prayer, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly and powerfully came upon me, and I was taken off in vision.”—*Testimonies, No. 1, p. 1:1*.

It was later changed to this:

“November 20, 1855, while in prayer, the Spirit of the Lord came suddenly and powerfully upon me, and I was taken off in vision.”—*Vol. 1, p. 113:1*.

The switching of “came” makes the revision flow more smoothly, without changing the meaning.

The other two variations on that page are equally inconsequential.

This provides you with a very good sampling of what nearly all the other variations are like.

TESTIMONY 13

Next we go to *Testimony 13*. This was Ellen White's earliest exposé of the spiritual crisis which had come to the church in Battle Creek. The most pointed passage in it is found in *1T 579:1b to 585:1* (*Testimony 13, p. 14:4 to 180a*). I have carefully examined this passage in both the original and our present *Vol. 1*, and this is what I find. This passage portrayed a terrible picture of how the church was printed by the Review. THIS was a passage the leaders would want to tone down—or eliminate entirely! Yet they did not do so. Here are the changes:

Vol. 1, p. 579:1—“cold reception which he met” from “cold reception he met.”

Vol. 1, p. 579:2—“I came home to Battle Creek like a weary child, who needed comforting words and encouragement” was changed to improve the chronological order of the paragraph, from its bottom to its top.

Vol. 1, p. 579:2—“large meeting, and that I was very weary” was changed from “large meeting. I was very weary.”

Vol. 1, p. 580:1—“fellow laborer whom” from “fellow laborer, whom.” / “as we met distrust and positive coldness instead of welcome and encouragement” from “as we met, instead of welcome and encouragement, distrust and positive coldness.”

Vol. 1, pp. 580:2-581:0—“Grieved in spirit beyond measure, I remained at home . . . for fear of being wounded” changed from “Grieved and wounded in spirit beyond measure, I remained at home . . . for fear of being wounded.”

Vol. 1, p. 581:1a—“Was not my interest in the cause and work of God as great . . . My whole experience and life were interwoven with it” changed from “Was not my interest in the cause and work of God as great . . . My whole experience and life were interwoven in the work and cause

of God.”/“had invested everything in this cause, and had considered” from “had invested everything in this cause. I had considered.”

As you can see, the changes improved and smoothed out the grammatical construction. Her powerful message was not toned down in the least, much less removed. Read the passage for yourself.

A similar strong testimony is *Testimony 23*, pp. 3-9 (Vol. 3, pp. 252-262); yet no real changes occurred.

TESTIMONY NO. 31

Next we will go to the strongest, most hard-hitting of Ellen White's printed testimonies to the brethren, in the books of the *Testimonies*. The first is *Important Testimony (5T 45-62)*; the second is *The Testimonies Slighted (5T 62-84)*. They were both in *Testimony No. 31* (which was also printed by Pacific Press as a booklet entitled, *Testimonies to the Battle Creek Church, 1882*). Unlike *Testimony 13* which stated everything in generalized terms, we have here two testimonies, of which Ellen later recognized needed to have some of its identities removed.

In the final printing, why did Ellen omit anything from those two testimonies? Let her tell us:

“During the last nine years, from 1855 to 1864, I have written ten small pamphlets, entitled, *Testimony for the Church*. . . It has been thought best to reprint them, as given in the following pages, omitting local and personal matters, and giving those portions only which are of practical and general interest and importance.”—3 *Selected Messages (4a Spiritual Gifts, facing p. 2)*.

“After the matter for the *Testimony* is prepared, every article must be read by me. . . I try to bring out general principles, and if I see a sentence which I fear would give some one excuse to injure someone else, I feel at perfect liberty to keep back the sentence, even though it is all perfectly true.”—3 *Selected Messages, 98 (Letter 32, 1901)*.

It was for the above stated reasons that, while preparing the final, permanent edition of this material, Ellen decided to leave out part of it, as we will learn below.

Here is the background of this: Goodloe Harper Bell (1832-1899) was a schoolteacher. He was converted during an illness when he was in the Battle Creek Sanitarium. For a time, he operated a private school in the community. Then, in 1872 he opened a school under the auspices of the General Conference, which later became Battle Creek College. By 1881, Bell was head of its English department. He strongly advocated Ellen White's principles of education, but some of the parents considered him a severe disciplinarian. He clashed strongly with the principal, Alexander McLearn, on the operation of the college. As a result, the college was closed for a year and Bell resigned, moved east to become the head of the newly established South Lancaster Academy. Two years later, he returned to Battle Creek and gave private instruction. Later still, he greatly helped in efficiently organizing our Sabbath schools.

On March 28, 1882, shortly after Bell left for Massachusetts, Ellen wrote *“Important Testimony” (5T 45-62)*, in which she set forth certain matters which she wanted Smith to read immediately to the Battle

Creek Church. It was true that Bell had made mistakes, but the church members had mistreated him. Parents were not properly disciplining their children at home, and were upset because Bell required obedience at school. Although he made mistakes, Bell's influence had been beneficial. The church needed to understand the issues involved, so they would not repeat them again.

There were principles in “Important Testimony” and “Testimonies Slighted” which should be published for the instruction of the church as a whole; however there were portions of a private nature which should not be circulated.

Therefore, *Testimony, No. 31*, containing both testimonies in a small booklet, was primarily printed for believers in Battle Creek. But, later, prior to their reissuance in Vol. 5, Ellen decided to omit certain portions. They were of too localized a nature for widespread circulation. She recognized that, in future years, she would have to work with Battle Creek and Uriah Smith at the Review; the messages had been written to them. Therefore, for the permanent, widespread record in Vol. 5, certain identifying passages were omitted.

Critics make much of this, and charge that this proves that wicked men tampered with the Spirit of Prophecy writings. But notice that, even here, **although some paragraphs were omitted, nothing was added. The obvious purpose is not sinister; it was done to maintain privacy.**

Ellen knew she was going to have to deal closely with Smith and the folk at Battle Creek for years to come, so she was guided to edit out part of those two testimonies before publication in Vol. 5. You will not find what leadership would have added, if it dared do so: praise of church leaders and the duty of members to obey them. The only positive statement about Smith was omitted! “Elder Smith . . . has been considered so mild, so kind, and so tender.”

Here is an overview, in my words, of what was in the omitted portions. (In order to conserve space: “sen” and “sen’s” = “sentence(s),” and “para” and “para’s” = “paragraph(s).” “E” = end of the paragraph, “a” = first part of the paragraph, “b” = middle of the paragraph, “*Testimonies, No. 31*” = “*T31*.”

IMPORTANT TESTIMONY (VOL. 5, 45-62)

5T 45:2E—Two sen's were omitted, Some kept silent and Brownsberger answered some questions (*T31, 20:1*).

5T 51:3 after sen 1—Some members had a wrong spirit towards Bell, who had a wrong spirit in some matters. I have reproved him for this (*T31, 26:1*).

5T 54:0E—I hope not to make public all the cruelty done to Bell in this case. [*T31, 29:0* clearly shows she did not want all this widely known.] Smith was considered mild mannered, but did wrong here. He will have to answer for it in the judgment. He could have prevented this, and was more accountable than anyone else. Smith can be firm when he wants, so his course here is without excuse (*T31, 29:0-2*).

5T 55:0E—What you have done to injure Bell is written in heaven, and you will have to answer for it. Bell could not take the pressure because of problems he was, at the same time, encountering at home [something personal, Ellen did not want generally published] (*T31, 30:3-31:0*).

5T 55:1E—Bell has done an outstanding work, which

has helped our schools and Sabbath school work everywhere. [Later, she says she does not want Bell to learn of this appreciation, since it would not be good for him to hear such praise] (T31, 31:3-4).

5T 58:0E—[At the end of 5T 58:0, which was not in T31, Ellen ADDED this: “If Brother __ were all that you represent him to be,—which I know he is not,—your course would still be unjustifiable.” [This addition shows that Ellen was in charge of what went into 5T; for neither Smith nor the members in Battle Creek would have added it!] (not in T31, 34:2E).

5T 58:0, after above addition—Your course has caused Bell the keenest suffering. Because he has now left Battle Creek, I write this letter to you (T31, 35:1).

5T 59:1E—Wales and Miller both had bad attitudes (T31, 36:2-3).

5T 59:2E—“I do not wish these statements ever to come before Bro. Bell. I would not utter a word of praise to come to any man. I fear the poor human nature could not bear it” (T31, 37:2). [This omitted two sen’s is a major part of the reason why she later omitted material from these two testimonies.]

5T 59:2E—Miller and Ramsey have not treated Bell properly (T31, 37:3-38:0).

5T 59:3E—You celebrated the birthday of the poet Longfellow, while treating Bell shabbily (T31, 38:2).

5T 61:2E—Gage has grave defects and would not bear what he has given to Bell (T31, 40:2-41:0).

THE TESTIMONIES SLIGHTED (VOL. 5, 62-84)

Now we begin the second letter. It was written because Smith waited several weeks before reading the preceding one. The original title was “*The Testimonies Rejected*”; but keep in mind that, as usual, both titles were selected in the offices of the Review. As you may know, Ellen generally did not write the titles for book chapters. When *Testimony No. 31* was initially printed by the Review in 1882, this chapter was entitled *The Testimonies Rejected*. The title was originated in the offices of the Review, as was the later title. By the way, “rejected” and “slighted” mean essentially the same thing. If I give you a message and you slight it, you have ignored and rejected it. That is what the word, “slight,” means.

5T 63:0E—Smith withheld the testimony from the church for weeks, and questioned whether it should be given at all. Shall he sit in judgment on my work (T31, 42:1E-43:0)?

5T 63:1b—Smith is stubborn and persistent on the wrong side (T31, 43:1b).

5T 64:0E—You are going, step by step, away from the light (T31, 44:1E).

5T 64:3b—“Eld. Smith” omitted (T31, 45:1b).

5T 66:1E—In doing this, you have virtually rejected all the testimonies. My work is like that of Elijah (T31, 46:3-47:2).

5T 67:2b—The document was not read until the General Conference convened (T31, 49:1b).

5T 68:2E—Smith belittled the letter as my own opin-

ion. The work he is doing, he will later wish undone (T31, 50:2-3a).

5T 70:1E—It is terrible that this is occurring right at the heart of the work (T31, 52:1E).

5T 71:1a—“to you in Battle Creek” omitted (T31, 53:1a).

Carefully comparing three of the strongest passages in “*Testimonies Slighted*” in Vol. 5, I found few typographical mistakes between *Testimony No. 31* and our edition (the chapter in Vol. 5). Marian was probably a better proofreader than James earlier had been. As head of the Review, he had many duties to tend to. But she was able to focus entirely on proofreading and searching for typesetting errors.

The following three passages, the ones printed in Vol. 5, are most likely to be changed in order to soften them down. Read the passages for yourself and see how strong they are.

Vol. 5, 66:2-67:1—No changes, other than changing “he” and “him” to “He” and “Him” in reference to God.

Vol. 5, 69:0—“doubt is removed you will never” from “doubt is removed, you will never” / “perfect knowledge will never” from “perfect knowledge, will never” / “promptings cease and will” from “promptings cease, and will” / “resisted His Spirit” from “resisted his Spirit” / “light to His people” from “light to his people.”

Vol. 5, 71:1—“walk in the light has” from “walk in the light, has”

Notice that, in 68:3, it mentions that Ellen in vision was taken into homes and heard their conversations. The critics claim she was ignorant of how her books were being changed. Yet God could—and did—in vision transport her into homes and committee meetings! Ellen White always knew what was taking place, even when she was in Australia.

In summary, it is charged that bad people have changed all the *Testimonies*. But, in this study, we have only discovered a few typographical corrections and two letters in which some paragraphs were omitted by Ellen; nothing more.

As mentioned earlier, the booklets, *Testimonies, No. 1 to 30*, were published in 1885 as *Vols. 1 to 4*.

Testimonies, No. 31 to 33, were also first published as booklets, and then, later, as *Vol. 5*.

All later testimonies were not first printed as booklets, but were directly printed in one of the volumes of the *Testimonies (Vols. 6 to 9)*.

Everything printed in all of the *Testimony* books were selected by Ellen White. All corrections and changes were done by her helpers in her home, under her direction and review.

All of Ellen’s printed materials (whether they be articles or books), prior to 1878, were proofed by James White; from 1878 onward, Marian Davis and other trusted helpers performed this task. —vf