

Institute for Christian Teaching
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists

OPENNESS FOR RENEWAL
WITHOUT DESTRUCTIVE PLURALISM

THE DILEMMA OF DOCTRINAL DISSENT

by

Dalton D. Baldwin

Department of Theological and Historical Studies
School of Religion
Loma Linda University
Loma Linda, California

Prepared for the
Faith and Learning Seminar
held at
Union College
Lincoln, Nebraska
June 1989

038 - 89 Institute for Christian Teaching
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring Md 20904, USA

OPENNESS FOR RENEWAL WITHOUT DESTRUCTIVE PLURALISM

THE DILEMMA OF DOCTRINAL DISSENT¹

Join me on a time warp journey to first century Tarsus in southeastern Asia Minor. The father of little Saul is a Roman, a Gentile. His mother is Jewish. She is proud of her son and hopes he will cherish his heritage and continue to be one of the faithful remnant. She has taught him a customary Jewish morning prayer. She fondly lays her hand on his shoulder as she listens to his words. I thank thee that "thou hast not made me a Gentile, a slave or a woman."²

No doubt the prayer was developed because everyone recognized that it was a distinct disadvantage to be a Gentile, slave or woman in Jewish culture. This prayer, seemingly attributing the conditions of Gentiles, slaves and women to God, indicates that cultural errors had been absorbed into a religiously sanctioned value system and world view. Little did Saul then know the trauma that would be involved in the renewal of that value system.

Years later Paul would write. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus."³ To the members of the Galatian Church Paul's counsel felt like a soul-wrenching attack on the "pillars" of the faith. For them the divinely revealed *Torah* forbade eating and worshiping with uncircumcized

Gentiles. Their loyalty to the circumcision "pillar" and their resistance to renewal illustrates a difficult problem.

The church faces a dilemma. On the one hand it needs openness for discussion of new understandings of truth in order to grow in the faith. On the other hand, maximum success in the nurture and support of new members requires loyalty to the "pillars" of the faith. The value system and world view of the church must pervade every activity of every member so that children and new members can "catch" these values unconsciously through social interaction.

This dilemma is related to motifs which have sometimes come into conflict in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. On the one hand the founding fathers and mothers often spoke of "present truth." In the vigor of their youth they sought to be open to new light. They resisted formulating a creed because creeds have a tendency to impede the recognition and acceptance of new light. On the other hand they loyally supported and zealously defended the "pillars" and the "landmarks." Sometimes openness for "present truth" and zealous defense of the pillars have come into conflict in our history. At times it has seemed that defense of the "pillars" has excluded openness for renewal.

This paper seeks an answer to the question, Is it possible to be open for renewal while at the same time defending the "pillars"? When learning suggests revisions in established formulations of the faith, should we integrate these results into our faith?

Because those who are inclined to exclude openness for renewal frequently quote statements about the "pillars" from the writings of Ellen G. White, it is appropriate to make these writings a point of reference for this study. Since she taught and practiced the principle that the Bible alone is the final authority for

¹A revised seminar paper presented to The Institute for Christian Teaching, Lincoln, Nebraska, June 25, 1989, by Dalton Baldwin, Professor of Christian Theology at Loma Linda University.

²William Barclay, *Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 32.

³Galatians 3:28. Unless otherwise indicated biblical quotations are taken from the *Revised Standard Version*.

doctrine and practice,⁴ following her example will guide us in the development of a sound doctrine of openness for renewal.

APPARENTLY CONTRADICTIONARY COUNSEL

Ellen G. White reflected the custom of the faith community when she used the word "pillar" in parallel with words like "pin," "landmark," and "foundation."⁵ The "pillars" are the "vital points of our faith."⁶ They are the identifying characteristics of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. "We are now to understand what the pillars of our faith are,--the truths that have made us as a people what we are, leading us on step by step."⁷ They are the core commitments which constitute the identity of our faith community.

Attempts to collect an exhaustive list of the "pillars" have been frustrating. If the pillars have led us on step by step, which step is the point after which no new identifying characteristics can be added? Furthermore, when written lists of the pillars are compared, there are significant differences; and none of the lists explicitly mention some teachings which are important for Adventist identity such as the second coming of Christ and the message of health and temperance.

The attempt to identify an exhaustive list of unrevisable pillars is based on the conviction that the definitive list of pillars has already been completely revealed. Along side of a set of Ellen G. White statements which have been assembled and interpreted to support a set of known, finally formulated pillars there is another set of statements which encourage openness for correction and development. Let us examine first a representative sampling of the statements which appear to support an identifiable list of unrevisable pillars.

Apparently the Pillars are Unrevisable. When F. D. Nichol prepared the compilation *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, his headings and subheadings indicated that he understood that a certain list of doctrines are unrevisable pillars. Richard Leshar used the passage included in the section called **The Landmarks Defined**⁸ to formulate a list of landmarks.

The "foundations," or "landmarks," that is, doctrines not subject to change, were identified by the prophet as: (1) the cleansing of the sanctuary; (2) the three angels' messages; (3) the law and the Sabbath in relation to God's temple in heaven; and (4) "the nonimmortality of the wicked."⁹

Leshar seemed to regard this list as exhaustive because referring to Ellen G. White he said, "She fought change of the landmarks either by attrition or enlargement."¹⁰

A number of selections from the writings of Ellen G. White seem to support this view that there is an identifiable list of doctrinal pillars which should not be changed

There is to be no change in the general features of our work. It is to stand as clear and distinct as prophecy has made it. . . . No line of truth that has made the Seventh-day Adventist people what they are, is to be weakened. We have the old landmarks of truth, experience, and duty, and we are to stand firmly in defense of our principles, in full view of the world.¹¹

In 1904 the denomination was struggling with the controversy over "pantheism" and Ellen White wrote:

What influence is it that would lead men at this stage of our history to work in an underhanded, powerful way to tear down the foundation of our faith. . . . Do you wonder that when I see the beginning of a work that would remove some of the pillars of our faith, I have something to say? I must obey the command, "Meet it." . . . But the waymarks which have made us what we are, are to be preserved, and they will be preserved, as God has signified through His word and the testimony of His

⁴2 SM 85; GC 205; FE 126.

⁵9 T 69; MM 87; EW 258-259.

⁶4 T 211.

⁷CWE 29, RH, 25 May 1905.

⁸CWE 30.

⁹Richard Leshar, "Truth Stands Forever," *Adventist Review* 157(13 March 1980): 271.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹6 T 17, 1900.

Spirit. He calls upon us to hold firmly, with the grip of faith, to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority.¹²

Shortly after the turn of the century Pastor Albion F. Ballenger became dissatisfied with the prevailing formulation of the doctrine of the sanctuary. After his preaching on the subject had raised controversy in England, his case was referred to the General Conference in Takoma Park in 1905. Ellen White was present at the conference; and three days after his examination, she presented a message regarding his position.

In clear, plain language I am to say to those in attendance at this conference that Brother Ballenger has been allowing his mind to receive and believe specious error. . . . When men come in who would move one pin or pillar from the foundation which God has established by His Holy Spirit, let the aged men who were pioneers in our work speak plainly.¹³

During the period surrounding the Ballenger episode Ellen White made frequent appeals to preserve the pillars. "We want solid pillars for the building. Not one pin is to be removed from that which the Lord has established."¹⁴ "They are not to remove one pillar or pin from the foundation of truth that the Lord has built up from point to point by the ministration of the Holy Spirit."¹⁵

When the power of God testifies as to what is truth, that truth is to stand forever as the truth. No after-suppositions, contrary to the light God has given are to be entertained. . . . And while the Scriptures are God's word, and are to be respected, the application of them, if such application moves one pillar from the foundation that God has sustained these fifty years, is a great mistake.¹⁶

When these statements and others like them are presented in this fashion, they seem to support the position that there is a known list of foundation doctrines which have

been fixed and are beyond any possible correction or improvement. We turn now to examine a representative sample of statements which seem to teach the opposite view that all doctrines, even the pillars, should be subject to correction and improvement.

Apparently the Pillars Should Be Revisable. The spiritual vitality and stability of the believing community requires a constant search for better understanding of the doctrines of the church.

Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of his word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths. This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the end. But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God's word, and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative, and seek to avoid discussion.

The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God's people, should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. There is reason to fear that they may not be clearly discriminating between truth and error. When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves, to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what.¹⁷

No doubt controversy and agitation are not constructive in themselves, but when the church is in good health there will be discussion of new views.

A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner were young Pacific Press editors who taught occasionally at Healdsburg College. They held that the law discussed in Galatians included the moral law, and G. I. Butler, the General Conference President, held the traditional view that the law in Galatians was limited to the ceremonial law. Butler tried to prevent them from making a

¹²*Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 2, 7 August 1904, 58-59.*

¹³Manuscript 62, 1905, 1, Ms. Release # 760.

¹⁴CWE 53, 35 May 1905.

¹⁵Letter K 95, 1905, 4, Ms. Release # 784.

¹⁶CWE 31-32, 1905.

¹⁷5 T 706-707, 1882.

presentation at the 1888 General Conference at Minneapolis and from teaching their view at Healdsburg College. In a sermon at Minneapolis on October 21, 1888, Ellen White said the following:

Instructors in our schools should never be bound about by being told that they are to teach only what has been taught hitherto. Away with these restrictions. There is a God to give the message His people shall speak. Let not any minister feel under bonds or be gaged by men's measurement.¹⁸

When Ellen White encouraged them to present their views at Minneapolis and at camp meetings throughout the United States, she was accused of undermining the pillars and landmarks. She responded to such accusations by warning that many leaders, who were expecting the Messiah, rejected Jesus because they were not open to new light.

Truth is eternal, and conflict with error will only make manifest its strength. We should never refuse to examine the Scriptures with those who, we have reason to believe, desire to know what is truth as much as we do. Suppose a brother held a view that differed from yours, and he should come to you, proposing that you sit down with him and make an investigation of that point in the Scriptures; should you rise up, filled with prejudice, and condemn his ideas, while refusing to give him a candid hearing?

The only right way would be to sit down as Christians and investigate the position presented, in the light of God's word, which will reveal truth and unmask error. To ridicule his ideas would not weaken his position if it were true. If the pillars of our faith will not stand the test of investigation, it is time that we knew it. There must be no pharisaism cherished among us. When Christ came to His own, His own received Him not; and it is a matter of solemn interest to us that we should not pursue a similar course in refusing light from heaven.¹⁹

In first century Judaism the doctrine of the Messiah was a pillar, and their doctrine portrayed the Messiah as conquering the Romans by force. Making such a pillar unreviseable led them to reject Jesus. Even pillars are subject to critical investigation

and possible revision. "If the pillars of our faith will not stand the test of investigation, it is time that we know it, for it is foolish to become set in our ideas, and think that no one should interfere with our opinions."²⁰

Sometimes champions of true doctrine feel that unity demands that no one propose improved formulations of doctrine. Ellen White insists that the unity for which Christ prayed sometimes requires painful adjustment. She held that the need for constant openness arises out of the flaws that are present in anything in which there is human participation.

We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed.²¹

Every formulation of fundamental beliefs involves human participation and therefore cannot claim infallibility. Ellen White did not exclude the pillars when she wrote that all doctrines should be subject to close scrutiny.

There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.²²

Although lengthy survival under critical scrutiny should increase our confidence in a doctrine, there is no certainty that the doctrine is beyond improvement.

To the degree to which a pillar is true, it will not be damaged by close investigation. If there is a flaw in the formulation of a doctrine, critical analysis may lead to an improved understanding.

¹⁸Manuscript 8a, 1888, Quoted in A. V. Olson, *Through Crisis to Victory*, p. 273.

¹⁹CWE 44-45, RH, 18 June 1889.

²⁰"Blessings of Bible Study," *Signs of the Times* 19(6 February 1893): 214.

²¹CWE 37, RH, 26 July 1892.

²²CWE 35, RH, 20 December 1892.

The development of truth is the reward of the humble-hearted seeker who will fear God, and walk with him. The truth which the mind grasps as truth is capable of constant expansion and new development . . .

Sharp, clear perceptions of truth will never be the reward of indolence. Investigation of every point that has been received as truth will richly repay the searcher; he will find precious gems. And in closely investigating every jot and tittle which we think is established truth, in comparing scripture with scripture, we may discover errors in our interpretation of Scripture. Christ would have the searcher of his word sink the shaft deeper into the mines of truth.²³

We should not be surprised if upon examination some aspect of an established pillar needs to be revised. This second set of statements supports the conclusion that we should hold every aspect of doctrine, including pillars, open for renewal.

HUMAN FALLIBILITY

We are faced with an apparent contradiction. One set of statements supports the conclusion that a certain set of foundation doctrines should be maintained without revision of any kind. The other set supports the conclusion that even the pillars are subject to revision. How can we resolve this difficulty?

One of the reasons Ellen White gave for the need to hold every doctrinal formulation open for renewal is that only God and heaven are infallible. That would mean that everything in which fallen human beings are involved *is* fallible. This conclusion might shatter our security if there were no dependable way to overcome the problem. We may derive a method for maintaining security from the method for overcoming difficulties in Scripture offered by Ellen G. White.

Overcoming Problems in Scripture. Ellen White discusses a number of problems in Scripture with candor. She points out that we should not expect perfect copying and translation in the

Bible.²⁴ The Bible is not written in "grand superhuman language" but in the "language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect."²⁵ She even explains how erroneous human tradition has crept into the Bible.

I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible: yet when copies of it were few, learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition. But I saw that the Word of God, as a whole, is a perfect chain, one portion linking into and explaining another.²⁶

We should not expect that every concept in the Bible is infallible. A change which incorporated an idea from human tradition would include error. But notice that she quickly suggests a way to overcome such errors.

The Infallible Underlying Harmony. The ideas which connect with each other in a self-consistent chain in the Bible as a whole form a stable standard for truth.

And as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony.²⁷

It is not every concept in the Bible that is infallible. It is the underlying harmony of the Bible as a whole that is infallible.

An example of contradiction on the surface of the Bible is the conflict in the two accounts of David numbering Israel. The early account says, "Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, 'Go, number Israel and Judah.'"²⁸ The same story retold many years later quoting most of the earlier account says, "Satan stood up

²⁴1 SM 16.

²⁵1 SM 20.

²⁶EW 220-221.

²⁷GC vi.

²⁸2 Samuel 24:1.

²³"Treasure Hidden," RH 75(12 July 1898): 438.

against Israel, and incited David to number Israel."²⁹

The second account is much more consistent with the teaching of the Bible as a whole about the justice of God than the first. Even though the first account is clearly wrong in saying that God actively incited David to number Israel, we should not question the authority of the Scriptures. From a study of the Bible as a whole we learn that the early Old Testament frequently speaks as if God actively does what he only permits. The infallibility and authority of the Bible does not reside in each and every concept in the Bible. It is the Bible as a whole that is authoritative and infallible.

This infallible chain from the Bible as a whole is not always easy to locate. Sometimes considerable time and effort is required to identify the self-consistent chain of truth.

The truths of the Bible are as pearls hidden. They must be searched, dug out by painstaking effort. Those who take only a surface view of the Scriptures will, with their superficial knowledge, which they think is very deep, talk of the contradictions of the Bible, and question the authority of the Scriptures. But those whose hearts are in harmony with truth and duty will search the Scriptures with a heart prepared to receive divine impressions. The illuminated soul sees a spiritual unity, one grand golden thread running through the whole, but it requires patience, thought, and prayer to trace out the precious golden thread. Sharp contentions over the Bible have led to investigation and revealed the precious jewels of truth.³⁰

The resolution of some surface contradictions requires prolonged, intense dialogue in order to develop consensus on the real teaching of the Bible as a whole. When a person uses the authority of the Bible as a base for each statement in such a dialogue, the authority of the Bible is reinforced.

When we interpret the statement that "the LORD...incited David [to] number Israel" to mean that God permitted David to number Israel, the authority for reversing

the meaning of the original biblical passage does not come from autonomous human reason alone. The correct understanding of God's action in relation to the numbering of Israel by David comes from the underlying harmony of the Bible as a whole. A person should not change the meaning of the grammatical and linguistic intention of a passage in the Bible using autonomous reason alone. It is only safe to deviate from a passage in the Bible on the authority of the Bible itself.

RENEWING PILLARS IN BIBLE TIMES.

Although there is no explicit account of the method used to validate renewal of pillars in Bible times, we can gain some helpful insights from examining the implications of what has been recorded

Revising the Messiah Pillar. Judaism expected a Messiah who would use physical force to establish His kingdom. We would be more sympathetic with them if we remember that in most of the passages of the Old Testament where they saw an anticipation of the Messiah there is a description of violence. "You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."³¹ "He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses."³²

We now recognize that the suffering servant of the servant songs³³ is the Messiah, but the servant is explicitly identified as Israel³⁴ in one of these songs, and Isaiah 53 does not mention the Messiah. The account of Peter's horror when Jesus said that he would be killed³⁵ shows that Peter's concept of the Messiah pillar had no place for a suffering servant who would establish his kingdom without violence. When Jesus died, was

³¹Psalm 2:9.

³²Psalm 110:6.

³³Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12.

³⁴Isaiah 49:3.

³⁵Matthew 16:21-23.

²⁹1 Chronicles 21:1.

³⁰1 SM 20.

resurrected and ascended to heaven without violently establishing a visible kingdom, the disciples were forced either to give up their faith that Jesus was the Messiah or revise their Messiah pillar.

With great difficulty they re-examined everything written about Jesus "in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms"³⁶ and revised their doctrine of the Messiah. Even though there are many references in the Old Testament which seem to portray the Messiah as establishing his kingdom by force, they recognized that the underlying harmony of the Old Testament as a whole supported the new view.

For many years the followers of Jesus as the Messiah continued to worship in the temple and considered themselves faithful members of Judaism.³⁷ The new concept of the Messiah constituted a constructive pluralism for Judaism. Judaism damaged itself when it refused to be open to the renewal of its Messiah pillar and rejected Christians from synagogue and temple worship and forced them to form a new religion.

Dropping the Circumcision Pillar. Circumcision was a pillar for the disciples of Jesus and was only dropped after intense conflict. When the revival and reformation team came down from the "General Conference" to Antioch, they no doubt cited the key text which established circumcision as the sign of an "everlasting covenant;"³⁸ and pointed out that there is no suggestion in the Old Testament that circumcision would be discontinued when the Messiah comes. Peter and then even Barnabas were "carried away"³⁹ by the charismatic power of what the team claimed was the Holy Spirit. Peter and Barnabas stopped eating and worshipping with uncircumcised Gentiles.

Several years prior to this incident after eating and worshipping with the uncircumcised Cornelius, Peter had been

charged with destructive pluralism at headquarters. He had defended himself by claiming the authority of revelation. When Peter had first come to Antioch, he had eaten and worshiped with uncircumcised Gentiles; and then, when he had been challenged by the biblical interpretation of the team from headquarters, he had backed down.

Paul charged Peter with inconsistency since true revelation is consistent with itself. The noble Bereans examined "the scriptures daily to see if" what Paul preached was true.⁴⁰ Peter should not have credited his housetop dream with revelation unless it had been consistent with prior revelation. Since there is no explicit Old Testament teaching that circumcision should be dropped when the Messiah comes, support for going against the sign of an "everlasting" covenant would need to come from the underlying harmony of the Old Testament as a whole.

In rejecting circumcision Paul seems to be arguing from the underlying harmony of the whole Old Testament. Jeremiah held that physical circumcision was inauthentic where the obedience of faith is lacking. He pointed out that those of Egypt and Judah who were physically circumcised were really "uncircumcised in heart."⁴¹ What really counts is circumcision of the heart.⁴² In harmony with this position Paul held that "if you break the law, circumcision becomes uncircumcision."⁴³ He then argued that since "he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical," a person "is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal."⁴⁴

In his speech at the Jerusalem council Peter seems to think of circumcision as a "custom of Moses"⁴⁵ rather than a divinely initiated law because it would be

³⁶Luke 24:44.

³⁷Acts 21:26, Revelation 2:9; 3:9.

³⁸Genesis 17:7, 13.

³⁹Galatians 2:13.

⁴⁰Acts 17:11.

⁴¹Jeremiah 9:25.

⁴²Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4.

⁴³Romans 2:25.

⁴⁴Romans 2:28-29.

⁴⁵Acts 15:1.

inappropriate to refer to a practice initiated by God as a yoke "which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear."⁴⁶ We do not know all that "human tradition" in Colossians 2:8 includes, but it certainly includes circumcision. Using the authority of the underlying harmony of the Bible as a whole, Paul and the developing Christian Church had dropped a central pillar of their former faith.

REVISING PILLARS IN THE ELLEN WHITE ERA

No doubt Francis Nichol was endeavoring to bring out the underlying harmony of Ellen White's statements when he implied that there is a definitive list of unrevisable pillars and that we should expect new light only on peripheral matters. Ellen White's participation in the renewal of several pillars would suggest that we should search for a more adequate harmonization of her statements.

Arbitrary overemphasis on either set of quotations results in great damage. An emphasis on openness for renewal which ignores the need for loyalty to community adopted pillars destroys security, stability and the significance of the pillars. On the other hand, if we make Ellen White's formulation of a doctrine unrevisable on the basis of better understanding of the Bible, we give Ellen White's writings authority above that of the Bible. Those who refuse to accept any teaching from the Bible that is contrary to the teaching of Ellen White may have good intentions, but such a practice will eventually destroy her authority because such an action violates the principle that the Bible is the only final authority for doctrine and practice. We are justly critical of our friends the Latter Day Saints who say that the Bible is true as long as it agrees with the inspired translation and interpretation of Joseph Smith. We need an interpretation of these two sets of statements that will incorporate the value of both.

There is some question whether Ellen White was really intending to "define" the

pillars as Nichol suggested with his subheading, **The Landmarks Defined.**⁴⁷ She was under attack for destructive pluralism because she supported presentations by Jones and Waggoner at Minneapolis. Apparently she intended to show that she was not undermining any pillars. After mentioning several central church teachings, she wrote, "I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks. All this cry about changing the old landmarks is all imaginary."⁴⁸ This appears to be more a casual recall in the pressure of the moment than a studied effort to set permanent limits.

The significance of this statement is better understood as an affirmation of the principle that we should maintain stability in the church by loyal commitment to the central core of doctrine. Careful examination of a teaching, even of a pillar, requires committed use of the remaining teachings in the core of commitment as a base from which to examine consistency. Furthermore, examination of a pillar does not require suspension of commitment on that pillar although it requires suspended use of that pillar during the investigation. When we reevaluate a pillar, both the pillars used as presuppositions in the evaluation and the pillar which is found to be valid are strengthened. For this reason Ellen White could say, "Truth is eternal, and conflict with error will only make manifest its strength."⁴⁹

Wolterstorff is correct when he argues that weighing a teaching requires use of "control beliefs." What he means by control beliefs has many analogies to what Ellen White meant by "pillars." He goes on to explain, "What functions . . . as a control belief, in a given person's weighing of a given theory on one occasion may on another occasion be the theory under consideration."⁵⁰

⁴⁷CWE 30.

⁴⁸CWE 30-31.

⁴⁹CWE 44. See note 19.

⁵⁰Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason Within the Bounds of Religion* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 69.

⁴⁶Acts 15:10.

A re-examination of the Ellen White statements which at first reading seem to support a fixed list of unrevisable pillars reveals some qualifying expressions. It is the fundamental principles that are based on "unquestionable authority,"⁵¹ the "foundation which God has established by His Holy Spirit,"⁵² the pins which "the Lord has established,"⁵³ the foundation that "the Lord has built,"⁵⁴ and what the "power of God testifies"⁵⁵ as true which are unrevisable. Certainly, the list of pillars in the mind of God described in his language is fixed and unrevisable, but our lists are developed using "imperfect" sin damaged language. Ellen White argued that what the brethren regarded as pillars were not really the pillars that God had established. Where there is a legitimate question whether what is claimed to be a pillar is really a pillar, reexamination and possible revision is legitimate and necessary.

Slavery. Many sincere Christians of the American Bible Belt during the nineteenth century believed that slavery was an immovable pillar established by God. The question seemed so vital that every major denomination split over the issue.

The defenders of slavery attacked abolitionists for destroying the authority of the Bible. Senator William Smith of South Carolina, in 1820, said that he would not be "astonished" to find that Northerners were attempting "a new version of the Old and New Testaments," a "new model . . . to suit the policy of the times." They would "throw off such parts as were uncongenial to their interests, and leave the residue to God."⁵⁶ A Richmond Enquirer article in 1820 held that these "most

mistaken and misguided people" were replacing the "religion of 1,819 years for the humanity of the moment." The author held that from the time of Diocletian to the present "a blow so heavy has not been inflicted on revealed religion."⁵⁷

One of the most frequently cited passages used in support of slavery was Leviticus 25:44-46. The chapter begins, "The LORD said to Moses," and says that you may not enslave your own countrymen, but you may buy and hold slaves from the surrounding nations and your children may inherit them. Congressman John C. Weems of Maryland concluded that it teaches the "right of [slave] property by purchase."⁵⁸

The defenders of slavery were suffering from a faulty conception about the nature of biblical revelation. They did not realize that erroneous human tradition has in some cases crept into the Bible. When God reveals that slaves should receive kindly treatment, it is more appropriate to attribute the apparent approval of slavery to a cultural error than to the divine initiative. Even though every statement that mentions slavery in the Bible approves of slavery either tacitly or explicitly, a more careful analysis of the underlying harmony of the Bible as a whole shows that slavery is against God's will. No one who loves his neighbor as himself and does to others what he would want them to do to himself, could hold another person as a slave.⁵⁹

Because the defenders of slavery thought that God had initiated slavery, they thought that Paul's teaching that in Christ there is neither slave nor free was a spiritual teaching that applied to relations with God and not to social institutions in this world. They believed that pronouncing slavery contrary to God's will in opposition to explicit statements in the Bible which approve of slavery would destroy the authority of the Bible. It was difficult for them to recognize that using the underlying

⁵¹*Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 2, pp. 58-59. See note 13.

⁵²Manuscript 62, 1905. See note 13.

⁵³CWE 53. See note 14.

⁵⁴Letter K 95, 1905. See note 15.

⁵⁵CWE 31-32. See note 16.

⁵⁶Larry R. Morrison, "The Religious Defense of American Slavery Before 1830," *The Journal of Religious Thought* 37 (Fall-Winter 1980-81): 25.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 26, quoting *The Richmond Enquirer*, 8 January 1820.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 19, quoting *Congressional Debates*, 20 Cong., 1st sess., 10 January 1828, pp. 967-68.

⁵⁹Matthew 22:39; 7:12.

harmony of the Bible as a whole to correct cultural errors which had crept into the Bible would strengthen the real authority of the Bible.

Early Sabbath keeping Adventists adopted the abolitionist position of the North. Antislavery was so central to their commitment that it became a test of fellowship. When a church member in Oswego County, N. Y., supported slavery, Ellen White wrote to him, "Unless you undo what you have done, it will be the duty of God's people to publicly withdraw their sympathy and fellowship from you, in order to save the impression which must go out in regard to us as a people."⁶⁰

A superficial comparison of Ellen White's counsel with the surface approval of slavery in the Bible would lead to rejection of her abolitionist view because it seemed contrary to prior revelation. A misguided conscientious appeal to what is explicitly stated on the surface in the Bible will sometimes obstruct constructive pluralism and its renewal guided by the underlying harmony of the Bible as a whole.

How could a true prophet like Paul make such an ethical mistake as to send Onesimus back to be the slave of the Christian Philemon? He knew that for those who are baptized into Christ "there is neither slave nor free."⁶¹ Apparently God could not yet reveal to Paul that it was time to abolish slavery since new revelation could only be recognized as valid when it was seen to be consistent with prior revelation. If God is to preserve the freedom of his people, he cannot correct positions stated in the revealed document until the people become aware of the underlying harmony which forms the basis of testing the correction. A premature vision abolishing slavery would have been judged to be error because it would not have been consistent with what people thought the Bible taught. Although both sides should have respected the integrity of the other and avoided needless bloodshed,

the pluralism which renewed the slavery pillar was constructive.

Shut Door. Sabbath keeping Adventists referred to the doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary with the term "shut door" between 1844 and 1852. Miller had predicted that the door of probation would close at the end of the 2300 day prophecy and made effective evangelistic use of the parable of the ten virgins, the midnight cry, and the shut door. After 1844 Sabbath keeping Adventists believed that no one could be forgiven because God had left his mediatorial throne in the sanctuary and shut the door. The first published account of Ellen Harmon's first vision reflected this view of the shut door. In the vision she saw the Advent people climbing a straight and narrow path.

They had a bright light set up behind them at the first end of the path, which an angel told me was the Midnight Cry. . . . Others rashly denied the light behind them, and said that it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out which left their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and got their eyes off the mark and lost sight of Jesus and fell off the path down in the dark and wicked world below. It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected.⁶²

At the time of this first vision the community of believers understood that since Christ had left his mediatorial throne on October 22, no deliberate sin could be forgiven and no new conversions could occur.

In an account written years later Ellen White pointed out three types of evidence which at the time seemed to support their conviction that the door was shut in the sense that probation had closed. First, their Millerite biblical interpretation led to the conclusion that "their work for the world was done" on October 22, 1844. Second, before October 22 they felt impelled by the spirit to do evangelism, but afterward "they lost their burden of soul." Third, although the public had shown great interest in their preaching before that date, now "the bold

⁶⁰1 T 360.

⁶¹Galatians 3:28.

⁶²*Day-Star Extra*, 24 January 1846, p. 31.

and blasphemous scoffing of the ungodly seemed to them another evidence that the Spirit of God had been withdrawn from the rejecters of his mercy."⁶³

The "shut door" version of the sanctuary doctrine was one of the pillars until the early fifties. In 1848 James White wrote a letter to the Hastings family and said, "The principle points on which we dwell as present truth are the seventh day Sabbath and Shut Door. In this we wish to honor God's most holy institution and also acknowledge the work of God in our Second Advent experience"⁶⁴

When God revealed that slaves should be treated humanely, it was difficult for fallible human beings to avoid the conviction that God approved of slavery. When God revealed that he had been actively leading the Millerite movement, it was difficult to avoid the Millerite error that probation would close in 1844.

Robert Olson explained that Ellen Harmon "misinterpreted" her first vision.⁶⁵ Arthur White pointed out three factors which were involved in the renewal of the early doctrine of the shut door.

God can lead the minds of His people only as fast as they can grasp truth. And the factors which bring about change are: (a) A clearer understanding of God's Word; (b) His teachings through inspired messages, given at the time of need; and (c) Experiences and circumstances which have a bearing on the situations.⁶⁶

When they found people who seemed to be drawn by the power of the Spirit to hear the gospel and become converted, they restudied the Bible and concluded that probation had not closed after all. After several new members had been received into "the little flock," a basic consensus was developing on the new biblical

interpretation that the door to forgiveness and conversion was still open. A small minority continued to hold the old view of the shut door when J. H. Waggoner was being invited to accept conversion. Ellen White was present and recalled, "a testimony was given me through vision to encourage him to hope in God and to give his heart fully to Jesus, which he did then and there."⁶⁷

Sense perceived evidence that God was still drawing sinners to Christ led them to restudy the Bible and revise their "shut door" sanctuary doctrine. When a minority held out against a better understanding of the Bible, Ellen White had a vision confirming the better interpretation and bringing unity and stability in the community.

This sequence of doctrinal development follows the general outline described by Arthur White for the development of all the basic doctrines.⁶⁸ No new doctrinal positions or corrections were initiated through visions or dreams given to Ellen White. All doctrinal positions were initiated through careful study of the Bible. Often there was intense discussion and Ellen White reports that during the formative period her "mind was locked" so that she could not participate in that discussion.⁶⁹ The visions were particularly helpful because they presented in simple clarity the biblical interpretation which had been developed in Spirit guided group discussion and brought unity when an individual or a small group held out against the biblical interpretation which had been established.

When the heavenly sanctuary pillar was called the "shut door," it included the error that probation had closed in 1844. In the early fifties the faith community renewed their doctrine of the shut door deciding that people shut the door on themselves when they sin against the Holy Spirit. This doctrine of the shut door has nothing to do

⁶³4 SP 268.

⁶⁴Letter from James White to Brother and Sister Hastings, 2 October 1848 quoted in Robert W. Olson, *The "Shut Door" Documents* (Washington, D. C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1982), 21.

⁶⁵Robert Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White* (Washington, D. C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981), 58.

⁶⁶Arthur L. White, "Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question," Unpublished document from the Ellen G. White Estate, 10 November 1971, p. 42.

⁶⁷1 SM 64.

⁶⁸Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant* (Washington, D. C.: Ellen G. White Publications, 1956), 34-40.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 39.

with the sanctuary and was no longer emphasized as a pillar. The renewal of the doctrine of the shut door brought new courage and enthusiasm for the spreading of the gospel by Sabbath keeping Adventists.

Renewing an Element of the Sabbath Pillar. When James White and Ellen Harmon first learned about the Sabbath from Joseph Bates, they rejected it; but after they read his pamphlet on the subject, they began its observance. In his pamphlet Bates took the position that the Sabbath begins at 6:00 p.m.⁷⁰ When in 1847 a few members proposed sunrise and various other times, James White described Ellen's vision on the subject as follows:

In that vision she was shown that to commence the Sabbath at sunrise was wrong. She then heard an angel repeat these words, "From even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbaths." Brother Bates was present, and succeeded in satisfying all present that "even" was six o'clock.⁷¹

Both Joseph Bates and J. N. Andrews later published articles in the *Review and Herald* which argued that paying the vineyard workers in the evening at the end of a twelve hour working day shows that the Sabbath begins at 6:00 p.m.⁷²

About the time that Sabbath keeping Adventists were giving up their shut door view of the heavenly sanctuary, James White did some serious thinking about the gift of prophecy and published an editorial on the spiritual gifts. He held that the Bible should be "kept in front" and presented a convincing biblical argument showing why the church needs the spiritual gifts to "correct our errors" and lead the church into unity. He was concerned, however, about temptations to pride and fanaticism and explained that because of Paul's many

spiritual gifts he was given a "thorn in the flesh."

This proves that those on whom Heaven bestows the greatest blessings are in danger of being "exalted," and of falling, therefore, they need to be exhorted to be humble, and watched over carefully. But how often have such been looked upon as almost infallible, and they themselves have been too apt to drink in the extremely dangerous idea that all their impressions were the direct promptings of the Spirit of the Lord.⁷³

On the one hand he held that the community of faith needs to watch over those who have spiritual gifts in order to correct their errors, and on the other hand members who deviate from recognized biblical interpretation should submit to correction by the gifts. The tension between these two positions later produced problems in the renewal of the time to begin the Sabbath.

A few months later James White published an *Extra* edition of the *Review* in which he announced that he would no longer include accounts of the visions in the regular edition. This special edition included a biographical account of Ellen's experience and a description of early visions. In a note explaining the new policy he expressed the "hope" to alternate the vision edition with the general church paper every other week.⁷⁴ However, no further "vision extras" were published and between 1851 and 1855 no visions were published in the general church paper. During this same period James White seemed to become increasingly defensive when critics attacked Sabbath keeping Adventist doctrine as the "vision view." In an editorial he exclaimed:

What has the *Review* to do with Mrs. W.'s views? The sentiments published in its columns are all drawn from the Holy Scriptures. No writer of the *Review* has ever referred to them as authority on any point. The *Review* for five years has not published one of them. Its motto has been, "The Bible, and the Bible alone, the only rule of faith and

⁷⁰Joseph Bates, *The Seventh Day Sabbath, A Perpetual Sign* (New Bedford: Press of Benjamin Lindsey, 1846), 31-32.

⁷¹James White, "Time to Commence the Sabbath," *Review and Herald* 31 (25 February 1868): 168.

⁷²Joseph Bates, "Time to Begin the Sabbath," *Review and Herald* 1(21 April 1851): 71. J. N. Andrews, "The Time of the Sabbath," *Review and Herald* 1(2 June 1851): 92-93.

⁷³James White, "The Gifts of the Gospel Church," *Review and Herald* 1(21 April 1851): 69-70.

⁷⁴James White, *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald.....Extra* 2(21 July 1851): 4; available in the Ellen G. White reprints, vol 1, p. 16.

duty." Then why should these men charge the Review with being a supporter of Mrs. W.'s views?⁷⁵

While focusing his attention on the critics James White had undercut the authority of the gifts of the Spirit to the point where their capacity to bring unity was impaired. If the writings of Ellen White had no authority on any point and were not supported by the writers of the *Review*, they would not be able to correct a person who was in error and bring him into unity.

New convert R. F. Cottrell may have introduced the Seventh Day Baptist arguments for beginning the Sabbath at sundown. James White requested J. N. Andrews to prepare a white paper on the subject, which was later presented at a conference called to deal with the future status of the *Review*.⁷⁶ Joseph Bates, who was apparently wedded to the 6:00 p.m. position with the conviction that it had been confirmed by the vision of Ellen White, had been made chairman of the conference.

The paper by Andrews pointed out that since there were no clocks and watches until 1658, the twelve hours of the Jewish working day varied in length in summer and winter. He summarized his paper with three statements.

1. There is no Scriptural argument in support of six o'clock as the hour with which evening commences.
2. If that is the hour, the people of God for about 5,600 years were unable to tell when the Sabbath commenced.
3. The Bible, by several plain statements, establishes the fact that evening is at sun set.⁷⁷

Joseph Bates and Ellen White held out for the 6:00 p.m. time even after a majority of the conference participants adopted the conclusions of Andrews.⁷⁸

⁷⁵James White, "A Test," *Review and Herald* 7(16 October 1855): 61.

⁷⁶J. N. Andrews, "To the Brethren," *Review and Herald* 7(4 December 1855): 78.

⁷⁷J. N. Andrews, "Time for Commencing the Sabbath," *Review and Herald* 7(4 December 1855): 78.

⁷⁸Arthur White, *Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant* 35.

The conference also set up a committee composed of Joseph Bates, J. H. Waggoner, and M. E. Cornell which prepared an "Address" on the spiritual gifts.⁷⁹ The address agreed with James White that the Bible should be kept "in front." "Nor do we, as some contend, exalt these gifts or their manifestation, above the Bible; on the contrary, we test them by the Bible, making it the great rule of judgment in all things; so that whatever is not in accordance with it, in its spirit and its teachings, we unhesitatingly reject." The "Address" seemed to reprove James White for his editorial policy excluding the visions from the *Review* and for the editorial denying that the visions were a "test."

Dear Brethren, while we hold these views as emanating from the divine Mind, we would confess the inconsistency (which we believe has been displeasing to God) of professedly regarding them as messages from God, and really putting them on a level with the inventions of men. We fear that this has resulted from an unwillingness to bear the reproach of Christ, (which is indeed greater riches than the treasures of earth,) and a desire to conciliate the feelings of our opponents; but the Word and our own experience have taught us that God is not honored, nor his cause advanced, by such a course. While we regard them as coming from God, and entirely harmonizing with his written word, we must acknowledge ourselves under obligation to abide by their teachings, and be corrected by their admonitions. To say that they are of God, and yet we will not be tested by them is to say that God's will is not a test or rule for Christians, which is inconsistent and absurd.⁸⁰

Joseph Bates and James White apparently were acting on the opposite poles which were in tension in the 1851 editorial on the spiritual gifts. James White watched over Ellen by leading out in correcting her view on the time to begin the Sabbath. Bates supported Ellen's position advocating six o'clock as the time to begin

⁷⁹"Business Proceedings of the Conference at Battle Creek Michigan," *Review and Herald* 4(4 December 1855): 76.

⁸⁰Joseph Bates, J. H. Waggoner, and M. E. Cornell, "Address of the Conference Assembled at Battle Creek, Mich., Nov. 16th, 1855," *Review and Herald* 7(4 December 1855): 78-79.

the Sabbath and emphasized the authority of the spiritual gifts to correct those who are in error bringing the community into unity.

At the close of the conference Ellen White was still opposed to the new view and bowed with a group to pray for "the prosperity of the cause."⁸¹ While praying she received a vision which encouraged her to adopt the new view.⁸²

Bates was now in an awkward position. He had urged that the visions had authority to correct those in error and now the vision corrected his biblical interpretation. He responded with noble integrity by giving up his six o'clock view, and unity was preserved.

Since the spiritual gifts are given to correct errors, Ellen White naturally wondered why a correcting vision had not occurred more quickly.

I inquired why it had been thus, that at this late day we must change the time of commencing the Sabbath. Said the angel, "Ye shall understand, but not yet, not yet."⁸³

Years later James White suggested one reason why she did not sooner receive a correction. "For one I have ever been thankful that God corrected the error in his own good time, and did not suffer an unhappy division to exist among us upon the point."⁸⁴

This incident is an example of the method by which God corrects error through the activity of the spiritual gifts. The initiative for the development and correction of doctrinal positions comes through Spirit guided community Bible study. James White explained,

It does not appear to be the desire of the Lord to teach his people by the gifts of the Spirit on the Bible questions until his servants have diligently searched his word. When this was done upon the subject of time to commence the Sabbath, and most were established, and

⁸¹James White, "Time to Commence the Sabbath," *Review and Herald* 31(25 February 1868): 168.
Uriah Smith, "Not Satisfactory," *Review and Herald* 24(30 August 1864): 109.

⁸²1 T 116.

⁸³1 T 116.

⁸⁴James White, "Time to Commence the Sabbath," *Review and Herald* 31(25 February 1868): 168.

some were in danger of being out of harmony with the body on this subject, then, yes, *then* was the very time for God to magnify his goodness in the manifestation of the gift of his Spirit in the accomplishment of its proper work.⁸⁵

The Spirit gave Ellen White the gift of simply and clearly formulating the biblical interpretation which had been produced through Spirit guided discussion in the worshipping community. In this case the interpretation was a correction of a portion of an earlier Spirit guided interpretation.

We may now understand a second reason why the correction did not come more quickly. The community needed to learn that as they gained better understandings of the Bible they would sometimes need to correct positions which had been taken by Ellen White. This understanding involves an improved concept of the nature of revealed documents. Although they had corrected the error on slavery, they had not yet become conscious that it is occasionally necessary to correct errors that had crept into the Bible using the authority of the underlying harmony of the Bible as a whole. At that time there was a good reason why the angel was "not yet" able to give this explanation. They still believed that a genuinely revealed document contained no errors in any part. If the angel had explained that an Ellen White position would sometimes need to be corrected, they would have concluded that Ellen White's writings were not inspired or would have rejected the angel's explanation because it was contrary to their understanding of prior revelation.

The same conference responded to the complaints of James White about the burdens of conducting the *Review* by appointing Uriah Smith editor. Smith published an article from Ellen White in an early issue in which she suggested that between 1851 and 1855 the visions had become "less and less frequent" because they had not been "heeded." She rejoiced that the response to the Bates "Address" had turned things around.

⁸⁵Ibid.

The minds of the servants of God were exercised as to the gifts of the Church, and if God's frown had been brought upon his people because the gifts had been slighted and neglected, there was a pleasing prospect that his smiles would again be upon us, and he would graciously and mercifully revive the gifts again, and they would live in the Church, to encourage the desponding and fainting soul, and to correct and reprove the erring.⁸⁶

The power of the gift of prophecy to unify the church was demonstrated in the quick response of Joseph Bates to the new vision confirming the sunset time to begin the Sabbath.

Most of the readers of the *Review* quickly adopted the sunset time to begin the Sabbath after reading the article by J. N. Andrews, but a number were troubled about some of the things James White had said about the spiritual gifts. Hiram Bingham wrote a letter to James White expressing the "general feeling in our Churches" regarding some of his statements at various times in the *Review*. The readers felt that he had "placed a less estimate" upon the spiritual gifts than prevailed in the churches and suggested that he might need to "make some apology through the *Review*." In his response James White wrote the following about the spiritual gifts,

And if I have spoken in a manner that has given the idea that I lightly esteemed them, it has not "resulted from an unwillingness to bear the cross of Christ." It has been in reference to the welfare of the cause that I have spoken and acted, notwithstanding all my errors.

In this last phrase he came close to confessing an erroneous position. He went on to explain that those who do not understand the biblical doctrine of spiritual gifts and do not appreciate their biblical authority should not be tested by them. "On the other hand for those who profess to believe them to say they will in no wise be tested by them, is most irrational." In this statement he corrected the most problematic position in his editorial on the spiritual gifts as a test. He then restored their power to correct and bring unity when he said, "I believe them to be the property

⁸⁶E. G. White, "Communication from Sister White," *Review and Herald* 7(10 January 1856): 118.

of the church, and a test to those who believe them from heaven."⁸⁷ He loyally supported the authority of the gifts throughout the remainder of his ministry and the fruit of this support has been unity and stability.

The doctrine of the Sabbath had been a pillar from the very beginning of the movement. From the experience of changing an element of this pillar, the church should learn that occasionally an Ellen White position will need to be corrected by Spirit guided biblical interpretation. This correction was brought about with greater stability and security because of a new manifestation of the gift of the Spirit.

Both poles of the teaching of James White on the spiritual gifts must be maintained. On the one hand the church must "watch" over those with the spiritual gifts for they are not infallible. Paul told the Spirit guided community worshipping at Corinth to "weigh" what the prophets presented to them.⁸⁸ On the other hand individuals should "test" themselves by the gifts. Joseph Bates was brought into unity and found security when he recognized the authority of the spiritual gifts in relation to the time to begin the Sabbath.

The tension between these poles can be reduced if there is a recognition of the authority of the church as a Spirit guided community. Where "two or three are gathered in my name," the voice of the Spirit may be more clearly distinguished from the voice of mere culture.⁸⁹ Bates recognized the collective authority of the Spirit guided community in the correction of Ellen White's six o'clock time to begin the Sabbath and in her vision confirming this correction.

The Daily. Conflict over the "daily" near the end of the life of Ellen White further clarified the role of the Spirit guided community in the solution of doctrinal problems. The doctrine of the heavenly

⁸⁷James White, "From Bro. Bingham," *Review and Herald* 7(14 February 1856): 158.

⁸⁸I Cor 14:29.

⁸⁹Matthew 18:20.

sanctuary is one of the "pillars," and the springboard for this doctrine in Adventist history is Daniel 8:14. The fourteenth verse answers the question, how long is the vision concerning the "daily" and the activity of the little horn?

When Miller interpreted this passage, he identified the "daily" as paganism. Those who believed that the little horn referred to Antiochus Epiphanes thought that the "daily" referred to the daily sacrifice in the Jerusalem temple which was discontinued for about three and a half years. Miller rejected this view partly because he noticed that the word *sacrifice* was in italics and therefore supplied by the translators.

Miller concluded from a study of 2 Thess. 2:7-8 that the "daily" was paganism because pagan Rome had to be "taken away" before the "little Horn" as the "mystery of iniquity" could work.⁹⁰ The pioneers including Joseph Bates, James White, J. N. Andrews and most extensively Uriah Smith continued to identify the "daily" as pagan Rome.⁹¹

If the answer in verse fourteen involves the heavenly sanctuary, the question about the "daily" which is answered should also refer to the heavenly sanctuary. About the turn of the century a "new view" of the daily emerged in which both the question and the answer involved the heavenly sanctuary. L. R. Conradi published a book on Daniel in which he portrayed the Roman Catholic Church as taking away the "daily" ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary by substituting the mass and the mediation of human priests. Then after 1844 the sanctuary in heaven was restored to its rightful place when the doctrine of the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary was clearly presented. Already by 1900 E. E. Andross wrote S. N. Haskell pointing out that the new view conflicted with Ellen

White's statement about the "daily" in *Early Writings*.⁹²

Andross referred to a statement which had been published in *Present Truth* in 1850 and then included in *Early Writings*.

Then I saw in relation to the "daily" (Dan. 8:12) that the word "sacrifice" was supplied by man's wisdom, and does not belong to the text, and that the Lord gave the correct view of it to those who gave the judgment hour cry. When union existed, before 1844, nearly all were united on the correct view of the "daily"; but in the confusion since 1844, other views have been embraced, and darkness and confusion have followed. Time has not been a test since 1844, and it will never again be a test.⁹³

Conradi told A. G. Daniells about the new view when he was traveling through England on the way to the 1901 General conference. Daniells adopted it after a careful study by the General Conference committee in 1907. After O. A. Johnson distributed a tract supporting the old view to the delegates of the 1909 General Conference, W. C. White chaired the first public discussion of the subject in a two evening post session.⁹⁴ He felt that there was not a great deal of antagonism except for the paper distributed at the close of the meeting by L. A. Smith, son of Uriah and editor of the *Southern Watchman*. This paper was later developed into a tract by Smith and F. C. Gilbert. They held that Ellen G. White was an "infallible interpreter" of the Bible. In their minds the new view attacked the fundamental teachings of the church and the authority of the writings of Ellen G. White.⁹⁵

The denomination was threatened with paralyzing polarization. Neither side thought that the concept of the "daily" itself

⁹⁰William Miller quoted in Apollon Hale, *Second Advent Manual* 66, quoted in J. N. Andrews, "The Sanctuary," *Review and Herald* 3(6 January 1853): 129.

⁹¹R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1979), 397.

⁹²Andross to Haskell, Nov. 12, 1900 cited in Bert Haloviak, "Pioneers, Pantheists, and Progressives: A. F. Ballenger and Divergent Paths to the Sanctuary," unpublished paper from the Office of Archives and Statistics, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, June, 1980, p. 36.

⁹³EW 74-75, from Ellen G. White, "Dear Brethren and Sisters," *Present Truth* 1(November 1850) 86-87, Reprint, 12.

⁹⁴Haloviak, "Pioneers," 38.

⁹⁵L. A. Smith and F. C. Gilbert, "The Daily' in the Prophecy of Daniel," (1909), 2-3, 16-17, 24, 30-31, cited in Haloviak, "Pioneers," 38-39.

was the most crucial factor. Haskell wrote Daniells that the real issue was not so much the "daily" as the use of "the *Early Writings*."⁹⁶ Although W. C. White was inclined to support the new view, he agreed that the proper use of the Ellen G. White writings was the more important issue.

I have told some of our brethren that I thought there were two questions connected with this matter that were of more importance than the decision which shall be made as to which is most correct, the old or the new view regarding the "daily." The first is, How shall we deal with one another when there is a difference of opinion? Second, How shall we deal with Mother's writings in our effort to settle doctrinal questions?⁹⁷

No doubt Ellen White was aware of the use being made of her *Early Writings* statement by the supporters of the "old view." She did not commend them for correctly using her writings but encouraged them to call a conference, investigate the Scriptures together with open minds, and come into unity.

I have been waiting for the time when there should be an investigation of the doctrines that Brother Daniells and others have been advocating. When is this to be? If Elder Daniells thinks that some of the interpretations of Scripture that have been held in the past are not correct, our brethren should listen to his reasons, and give candid consideration to his views. All should examine closely their own standing, and by a thorough knowledge of the principles of our faith, be prepared to vindicate the truth.⁹⁸

She did not support the Smith-Gilbert position that her writings were an infallible interpreter of the Bible. Instead she encouraged everyone to join in a new community study the Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit with a willingness to accept any improved understandings which came to light.

⁹⁶Haskell to Daniells, Mar. 22, 1908, cited in "In the Shadow of the 'Daily:' Background and Aftermath of the 1919 Bible and History Teachers' Conference," unpublished paper presented to the Andrews Society for Religious Studies, 14 November 1979, 21.

⁹⁷W. C. White to Daniells, 13 March 1910, cited in Haloviak, "Shadow," 55-60.

⁹⁸Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, 24 May 1910, cited in Haloviak, "Pioneers," 42.

Some students noticing the dates of the Ellen G. White statements encouraging openness (Footnotes 17-23) in contrast with those apparently claiming unrevisable finality (Footnotes 11-16), have suggested that age and "hardening of the arteries" may explain the shift in emphasis. Most of the statements emphasizing the need to "hold the line" were made about 1905 in connection with the Ballenger episode. Since Ellen White encouraged candid openness for an investigation of the "new view" of the "daily" five years later, explaining the shift in emphasis by referring to age does not seem satisfactory.

A better explanation would call attention to the difference in the dominant conviction in the community in the two situations. In 1905 there was a strong consensus against the new views of Ballenger. In 1910 there was a growing consensus among the dominant leadership of the church in favor of the new view of the daily. We should point out that the final authority remains the Bible and not a mere majority vote of the leadership. When sincere men join together in mutual submission to the Spirit of Truth, they are better able to see where their prejudice and prior faulty conditioning have obscured the meaning of the Bible. Of course the Bible must be interpreted, and the Spirit of Truth may be more clearly heard when the community come together in candid openness for new and better understandings of the Word.

CONTOURS OF A CONSTRUCTIVE PLURALISM

In a very helpful article Ariel Roth has called attention to damaging consequences produced by destructive pluralism.⁹⁹ He cites Hoge who shows that the correlation between church growth and emphasis on a distinctive lifestyle is .97; between church growth and emphasis on local and community evangelism is .93; between church growth and strict standards of belief in contrast to pluralism in belief is .84.

⁹⁹Ariel A. Roth, "How to Invalidate the Bible-- Unconsciously: Some Thoughts on Pluralism About Origins," *Adventist Perspectives* 2(1988)12-19, 22-27.

These correlations are all quite high. Hoge's study did not correlate pluralism in churches with their church growth, but no doubt the correlation would be more like that between weak ethnic identity and church growth, which is .25.¹⁰⁰ Other data from D. M. Kelley show that conservative churches are growing at least twice as fast as the more liberal and therefore pluralistic branches of the same church family.¹⁰¹ These data suggest that pluralism tends to decrease church growth.

One of the important dimensions of the church involves social support of the members through unconscious social interaction. It would be reasonable to expect that aspects of the church world view and value system on which there is significant pluralism would not be reinforced by social interaction. Certainly pluralism on a valid element of world view or value system would produce a destructive impact in the church on that element.

This paper asks the question, is openness for renewal possible without destructive pluralism? Let us define constructive pluralism as variation required in order to introduce more valid elements into the world view or value system of the church. In contrast we could define destructive pluralism as variation tending to introduce invalid elements into the church. This paper has been building an argument that the quest for "present truth" requires constructive pluralism.

In every example of doctrinal conflict which has been cited, conscientious church members on both sides of the renewal issue thought that their position was valid. At the time of the conflict neither the individual

church member nor the administration knows for certain which innovations are constructive and which are destructive. We ought to give careful study to the most effective procedures for the encouragement of constructive pluralism and the elimination of destructive pluralism.

Individual Study. To the degree that every individual member understands the evidence supporting each aspect of the world view and value system, that person can more effectively evaluate proposals for renewal and more accurately identify destructive innovation. Each member will be more stable if along with the support of the social dynamics of the community of faith there is personal understanding.

If members are encouraged to hold doctrinal positions merely because they have been identified as valid by some human authority, a person who sounds authoritative can easily persuade them to adopt a new and perhaps faulty position. They will be "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine."¹⁰² Teaching members to depend on a list of fundamental beliefs as the criterion for evaluation will not promote genuine stability. Destructive pluralism will quickly receive social support in a group that is too dependent on human authority. Each individual should frequently reevaluate for himself the world view and value system of the church.

The Church Decides. Sometimes during individual study a member encounters a difficulty. After struggling with the problem for some time, a better solution may come to mind. That member should realize that one of the purposes of the church is to organize the faith community so that its combined judgment may increase the accuracy in identifying truth. The member should first contact more experienced members in an effort to get help in evaluating the new resolution of the difficulty. If the request by the member results in the more experienced member agreeing with the questioner that an

¹⁰⁰Ibid., Citing D. R. Hoge, "A Test of Theories of Denominational Growth and Decline," *Understanding Church Growth and Decline: 1950-1978*, ed. D. R. Hoge and D. A. Roozen (New York and Philadelphia: The Pilgrim Press, 1979), 179-197. If racial homogeneity is highly correlated with church growth, there could be racist overtones which cry out for renewal even at the expense of reduced church growth.

¹⁰¹Ibid., citing D. M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 178.

¹⁰²Ephesians 4:14.

alternative understanding is more consistent with the Bible as a whole, they should not start teaching an alternative "fundamental belief."

The church decides fundamental beliefs. In the Seventh-day Adventist church we are no longer able to assemble all members in the world to consider a revision. A representative group, which we call a General Conference in official session, makes the final decision on such matters. If the General Conference had to evaluate every innovation on which two or three people agreed, it would waste an enormous amount of time. Furthermore, the representative General Conference session cannot make a sound decision until the new proposal has been thoroughly and widely discussed so that the representatives can knowingly represent the judgment of their constituencies. If a representative group adopted a significant revision before pervasive positive consensus had developed in all of the membership, the members would find the new view so alien that they would be inclined to elect new and different representatives and reverse the decision. If no one discusses a proposed renewal until it receives a favorable vote at a General Conference Session, no new "present truth" would have a chance of being adopted.

The small circle should seek the help of a larger circle with greater experience such as a group of colleagues, a Sabbath School class, or a church study group. If a proposal receives local support, larger circles such as workers meetings, faculty meetings, camp meeting seminars, retreat study groups, forum discussions, and conference constituency meetings may profitably consider the matter. Regional study groups such as the annual West Coast Religion Teachers Conference have been helpful in eliciting and purifying renewal proposals. The General Conference Biblical Research Institute has been developed to coordinate the "research and development" aspect of church teaching. The Andrews Society for Religious Studies which meets in connection with the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature is an effective sounding board for renewal proposals.

The new Adventist Theological Society intends to be a balancing force coordinating international Adventist religion scholarship. The cooperation of all of these study networks is necessary in order to develop the kind of church-wide consensus which is necessary for successful renewal.

As wider and wider circles of experienced members see light in a proposal, participants will need to continue their discussion in writing. All the principles that apply to consulting local experienced members apply to requests from experienced members through published proposals.

During the sometimes prolonged period of developing a consensus on an improved formulation of the faith, all the participants should respect and teach sympathetically, the officially adopted fundamental beliefs of the church. Clear, sympathetic presentation of official church positions is an important aspect of practicing the "value" of the church. The value of the church is further enhanced when individuals and groups take the church seriously enough to make proposals for the improvement of church positions. When a clear distinction is made between officially adopted church positions and proposals for some future adoption, pluralistic proposals will not be so damaging to the social reinforcement function of the church.

Members would abdicate their individual responsibility before God if they stopped seeking for a more adequate resolution of the problem which brethren of experience in their immediate orbit agreed was worthy of consideration. There is always a temptation to evade individual responsibility for renewal because of selfish consideration of career advancement and threats to personal power and influence.

Practice the Golden Rule of Persuasion. Reformers are usually not good listeners. A constructive reformer says by his attitude and actions, "I will be as open to correction by you as I want you to be open to correction by me." A person who really practices the golden rule of persuasion follows the instruction, "Be subject to one another out of reverence for

Christ."¹⁰³ One of our most effective college religion teachers, whose ministry has been narrowed to an independent ministry in connection with mistakes made in proposing renewal, might still be with us if he had practice the golden rule of persuasion.

Avoid Polarization. Reformers should use the principle which teachers call "readiness" and should not press their proposal where there is inability to understand or where polarization is developing. When a group becomes polarized on an issue, they become so preoccupied that other more important matters are neglected. In 1910 when controversy over the "daily" became polarized, Ellen White wrote, "Regarding this matter under present conditions, silence is eloquence."¹⁰⁴

Continued pressure for renewal under polarized conditions produces schism. When a group of concerned church members polarized the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod in a renewal effort toward the "right" they split their church and a new moderate Luther denomination was formed. The Episcopalian Church is so polarized over the ordination of women that there is serious threat of schism.

Avoid Extrinsic Motivation. The primary factor bringing about change in sound renewal is consciousness of a weight of evidence supporting a more truthful position. Both those who advocate reform and those who defend the old ways are tempted to use extrinsic motivation.

Truth is the victim when people try to persuade through extrinsic factors. Extrinsic factors have nothing to do with clarifying the truth itself. They use desires for unrelated good things to manipulate people to change their position.

The most common extrinsic factor used to control thought is the power of hiring or firing. Those supporting the established view are the most likely to succumb to this temptation because they are in the positions

of responsibility which make these decisions. For many years only those graduating seniors from Pacific Union College who held that the "King of the North" was Turkey could be hired as ministerial interns in the Northern California Conference. Patient adherence to most of the principles of constructive pluralism on the part of renewal minded faculty and church leaders eventually brought about a change for the better.

Those who seek to initiate renewal are also tempted to use extrinsic motivation. Threats to withhold tithes and other financial support are analogous to threats about hiring and firing. Both have a tendency to subvert the truth. Criticism of those who misuse their power of hiring and firing is hollow when it is made by those who encourage the manipulation of thought through withholding tithes.

Other extrinsic motives to control thought include character assassination, reputation blackmail and deals involving *quid pro quo* support or silence on issues in the faith community. Truth is so precious and so fragile that no unrelated factors should be used to control its recognition and adoption.

CONCLUSION

Constructive pluralism is not only possible but necessary in the Church. The nature of human beings and the truth requires a progressive recognition of truth.

Pillars or "control beliefs" are vital for the stability of the church and the identification of new truth. Depth commitment on the pillars by every member will increase the efficiency of the church in its quest for "present truth." Following the contours of constructive pluralism will loyally support official church teaching while encouraging openness for renewal. When the church encourages constructive pluralism, the pillars will be strengthened and the church will accomplish its mission more effectively.

¹⁰³Ephesians 5:21.

¹⁰⁴1 SM 164, Ms II, 1910.