

**Manuscript Compilation  
Problems**

An Essay Examining a Compilation  
of the Writings of Ellen G. White

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## Pre-ambule.

In the year 1974 I was doing a course of study at the Christchurch School of Nursing (New Zealand) and I occasioned upon a 3rd Edition copy of the book Healthful Living in a Second-Hand Bookshop.<sup>1</sup> Upon reading this publication I was stirred to investigate in the local libraries for further evidence on some questionable statements in that publication. My studies revealed several bland statements were poorly referenced, and yet still others were in apparent error. My opinion of this writer, one Ellen G. White, was impressed ~~on~~ me to the degree that I discarded the book into the depths of my shelves and determined that such an ensample, if typical of her works, didnot warrant further investigation into original manuscripts for further details.

It was not until two years later, when I changed my denomination to Seventh Day Adventist, that I discovered more about this Mrs White. As my faith in her grew, I was once more tempted to compare the once-abandoned Healthful Living with the original sources. This I did, with the aid of the Seventh-day Adventist - Ellen G. White Research Centre at Avondale in 1978. I was enlightened, however, to find that the compiler of Healthful Living (Dr David Paulson) had not

1 Healthful Living. A compilation of some very brief statements by Ellen G. White. Compiled by David Paulson in 1898 - Published by Medical

misquoted the writer as I had first imagined. Although occasional words had been changed to make shorter statements from the seemingly typically (to a 20<sup>th</sup> Century ear) long sentences of Ellen White, I could not, as I said, find any instances of the compiler misquoting the writer. I did, however, find good cause for my questioning certain statements. Most of these had been removed from their original context and put under vague subheadings, others into a different context entirely, and other statements had insufficient referencing for me to trace them back to Ellen G. White's written (Published or unpublished) works. The undated references to Unpublished Testimonies; the references to Unpublished testimonies of 1888 (although 26 manuscripts were written in that year); and undated references to Health Reformer (a magazine of regular issue) made the tracing of these problem passages very difficult to realize.

It is the purpose of this essay to both share these problems and also to present my new view of the writer with the object of encouraging you to rely on what she actually says and not what she is reported to have said.

### Introduction.

It is not my intention in this essay to condemn, decry, or cast aspersions upon the compiler in any way and I am merely using his work as a resource to

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make reference to some of the problems that can occur, if we base our total understanding of Spirit & Prophecy counsel upon the brief references in general compilations without regard to their original context, with its equally important guide to the time and place of the original writing's circumstances.

These problems fall into eight general problem areas. These will be discussed individually and, briefly, are: Vague statements due to brevity, ambiguity or contextual semantics, statements in error due also to brevity or to contextual isolation, statements without regard for the time or place circumstances of the original writing, statements that become dangerous due to their contextual quotation, and unauthenticated statements. Each of these areas need not really be problem areas if a few basic rules were followed by both readers and compilers when using Ellen G. White. Rather than simply list these for you, may I suggest that they will become evident without a separate listing as we look at each problem area in turn, and discuss it.

#### 1. Vague Statements Due to Brevity.

Many statements that appear in the book Healthful Living are very brief, some as few as six or seven words. Ellen G. White, when referring to Healthful Living, said that she was never commissioned to write

proverbs.<sup>1</sup>

Examples of these from Healthful Living would be as follows:

Page 171, Paragraph 705: "In order to have good blood, we need to breath well." (Health Reformer - Undated.)<sup>2</sup>. Does well in this context mean deeply? Normally? (What is the norm?) Slowly? Regularly? Or often? The list could go on. (this statement is repeated with equal brevity on page 186, Paragraph 783.)

Page 175, Paragraph 724: "The proper use of the voice will bring benefit to the physical health, and increas your usefulness and influence." What is the proper use of the voice? Healthful Living puts this under the sub heading Proper Use Of The Voice, and it is the only quotation under this heading which doesn't answer the question it poses. Is the proper use not swearing, or articulation, or singing, or intonation, or simply not shouting? Once again we must go to the original source (Christian Education Pp 132) or compare the

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1. A.L. White, letter to Mrs Velma Henninger (SOA, EAW Research Centre Question + Answer file 43-C-18) Sept. 11, 1962. cf. other undated letters in same file.

2. A full list of all undated and inadequate references found in Healthful Living (the 3rd Edition) may be found in Appendix 2 on page 23. Appendix One is simply a list of these reference types with a brief note on each, and a note on the number of times each occurs.

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statement with scripture to get an interpretation (this shouldn't be a rule of thumb, as the Scriptures, by rights, should have first priority).

Nehemiah 8:8 in the King James Version reads "So they (Ezra and others) read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them (the people of the cities) to understand the reading." (Emphasis supplied: cf. RSV. — "clearly")

## 2. Vague due to Ambiguity.

This is very similar to the first, and is worth noting, at this stage, that the compiler did attempt to avoid ambiguity (although this wasn't his only reason) by slight changes in some of the wording, especially that connecting sentences. 1. The compiler is adamant that "not in a single instance has the thought expressed been modified in the slightest degree". 2.

You are invited to compare the following quotations:—

1. Healthful Living Preface to the 1st Edition (cf. opposing statement in the preface to the third Edition — "... It may be added that the compiler has carefully revised the entire work, making slight emendations and additions here and there in nearly every chapter, but, as before, without change in the original text from which the compilation has been made (p 4) — Emphasis supplied.

2. Ibid.

7.

Paragraph 307: "In order to maintain equal circulation, there should be an equal distribution of clothing which will bring equal warmth to all parts of the body" (Health Reformer - Undated)<sup>1</sup>

Compare this with Paragraph 775: -

"The... covering(s) of) the base of the brain heat and excite the spinal nerves centering in the brain. The head should ever be kept cool. The heat caused by these artificial coverings induces blood to the brain ... (which) tends to recklessness in morals." (Health Reformer - Undated)<sup>2</sup>:

These statements become vague without a context and tend to be conflicting in both thought and content. I am sure, however, that even though we cannot find a reference for these particular statements, we can interpret them in the tenor of the writings that we know were penned by E. G. White: and we then see them referring to unnecessary extremes in dress — which applies to this very day.

Internal ambiguity also occurs in some statements, ~~also~~. One such statement, in

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1. Healthful Living Pp 69

2. Ibid Pp 185



a similar vein to the last two, may be found as paragraph 788:

To secure a good circulation of the current of human life, all parts of the body must be suitably clad" (Health Reformer - Undated)<sup>1</sup>.

This statement, under the heading Clothing, is Earl-Sandwiched between the headings Drinking Water and Bathing. The statements context, therefore, in its location in Healthful Living gives no clarification nor interpretation of the ambiguity of the phrase "current of human life" which could have several meanings, eg: Water (which comprises 65% of humans), blood, Oxygen, christian spirit, emotions, cerebrospinal fluid, or the electrical nerve pathways. Only Scripture, in the absence of adequate referencing to E.G. White's original, can give us adequate clues, even then it could mean either blood (Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 17:14 + Parallels) or oxygen (Job 33:4, Ezekiel 37:5+6, Genesis 2:7 + Parallels).

### 3. Vague due to Contextual Semantics.

This third problem is the difficulty of determining the meaning of a key word or words when the context is too brief to make assertion cryptic. For example, Paragraph 395:—

1. ibid p 187

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"Food taken into the stomach at untimely seasons leaves an influence on every fibre of the system" (Health Reformer — undated.)<sup>1</sup>.

There is a problem in this statement because even in the context of this series of quotations there is uncertainty in the writer's intended meaning of "untimely seasons". The only clue we have from the surrounding statements is that it could mean food taken between regular meals — but what then of "leaves an influence on every fibre of the system"? It has been scientifically proven that food ingested causes an influence on the entire system irrespective of whether it is at regular intervals or between them.

#### 4. Statements in Error Due To Brevity

These statements, because they are so brief, tend to suggest the opposite of what the whole tenor of the publication — indeed all of Ellen G. White's writing — is all about. For example, this statement is found under the heading Prayers for the sick. It reads: Some, if they should regain their health, would indulge in some heedless transgression of nature's laws. (U.T. — undated)<sup>2</sup>. May we therefore assume that we should judge them and then decide

1. *ibid* pp 86.

2. *ibid* pp 237 Paragraph 1020.

not to pray for these who will only make themselves sick again should our praying cause God to answer our prayers for them? I should assuredly hope that the opposite would be true. In the book Ministry of Healing Pp 148, Ellen G. White says "His disciples in this time (now-a-days) are to pray for the sick as verily as the disciples of old prayed. And recoveries will follow; for the prayer of faith shall save the sick..."<sup>1</sup>

A parallel yet expanded statement, containing similar wording as that from Health Reformer is located on the next page of Ministry of Healing:

"Many persons bring disease upon themselves by self-indulgence... should these persons gain the blessing of health, many of them would continue to pursue the same course of heedless transgression of God's natural and spiritual laws, reasoning that if God heals them in answer to prayer, they are at liberty to continue their now "God-condoned" unhealthful practices and to indulge their perverted appetites without restraint."<sup>2</sup> We can see then, from this quotation and its fuller context, that the counsel is directed not to the person praying for the sick person — it is admonition for the sick one himself, and

1. Page 148 - Paperback Ed; Pp 226/7 Standard Ed.

2. Pp 149 - Paperback Ed; 227/8 - Standard Ed.

assuredly refers to the self same principle that the psalmist recognised in Psalm 66:18 — "If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened) R.S.V. cf Living Bible — "He would not have listened if I had not confessed my sins."

Consider also the reference immediately following the last one from Healthful Living under the selfsame heading: "we should first find out if the sick one has been withholding tithes or has made trouble in the church" (Health Reformer — undated)<sup>1</sup>.

In the compiler's context, tithe paying and religio-social conduct are made criteria for deciding whether or not to pray for the sick one or not. Surely this statement is more a diagnostic tool to determine the cause of the sickness rather than to be a judicial condemnative indictment. In Testimonies Vol 2 Pp 147, 148, Ellen White says "all we are required to do is to ask God to raise the sick up if (it is) in accordance with His will."<sup>2</sup>

##### 5. Statements in Error Due to Contextual Isolation

Drugs have been listed as one of the causes of disease in the chapter by that title

1. Healthful Living Pp 237 Paragraph 1021
2. Compare Luke 18:1 "... they ought always to pray and not lose heart" (RSV — cf. Living Bible — "... need for constant prayer... keep praying until the answer comes...").

in Healthful Living. The reference reads "Drugging (literally "the use of drugs") should be forever abandoned; for while it doesn't cure any malady, it enfeebles the system, making it more susceptible to disease". (Testimonies N<sup>o</sup> 32 Pp 67)<sup>1</sup>.

From the interpretation so easily rendered from Healthful Living we see that we should never use drugs under any circumstances. However, the statement in its original context (see 5 Testimonies p 311) it can clearly be seen that this isn't quite true. The counsel is to avoid drugs in preference to the laws of health: that drugs are not to replace these laws. The Messenger goes on to say in Ministry of Healing Pp 231 that "those who seek healing by prayer should not neglect to make use of the remedial agencies within their reach."<sup>2</sup> She then goes on to draw illustrations from scripture to support this (King Hezekiah in Isaiah 32:21 for example.)<sup>3</sup>.

A good case against physical exercise could possibly be extracted from Healthful Living Pp 204 (Paragraph 877) which reads: "Physical labour, a diversion from mental, will draw the blood from the brain."

1 Healthful Living Pp 65 Paragraph 282.  
Note - Testimonies N<sup>o</sup> 32 Pp 67 (1885) is duplicated in Testimonies Volume 5 Pp 311.

2. Ministry of Healing Pp 152 in Paperback Edition and 231 in Standard Edition.

3. ibid.

13.

a brain without oxygen will survive without irreversible damage for about 5 minutes. However a brain without any blood at all will not survive. But, if we refer to the original context (Second Testimonies p 569) we find that the preceding sentence suggests a balance between physical and mental exercise is referred to here, by saying that "the circulation will be better equalized (throughout the body)."<sup>1</sup> As you can see — an entirely different interpretation: one that makes commonsense rather than nonsense out of the writer's words.

A further example may be found on page 123 (Paragraph 544) of Healthful Living. The statement reads: "Half the diseases of women are caused by unhealthful dress" (Health reformer — undated.)<sup>2</sup> (Clearly this is in error when isolated from context because it not only contradicts modern health statistics, but also does not take into account the time and place of the writing of the statement. This latter point poses a difficulty because the source is undated. However we can relate it to the times in which E.G. White was writing. To expand this further, let us move to the next sub-heading...

1. Compare also 2<sup>d</sup> Testimonies p 531.

2. Healthful Living p 123 Paragraph 544.

### 6. Error due to disregard of Time+Place.

If we compare other statements written about the same time, we see a picture of wasp-waisted, leg-o'-mutton sleeved, hem-weighted garments worn by highly corsetted women who have been stretched and poured into them<sup>1</sup>. Little wonder they couldn't breathe properly, sit properly, walk properly, eat properly, or even sleep properly. Even less wonder Sr White referred to their dress as unhealthful. We must, however, remember that the principle still holds true today. In the Review and Herald of July 18, 1907 the Spirit of Prophecy says "Time and trial have not made void the instruction given but through years of suffering and Self sacrifice have established the truth of the testimony given. The instruction that was given in the early days of the message is to be held as safe instruction to follow in these, its closing days."<sup>2</sup>

1. cf. Paragraph 544 (Pp 123), Paragraph 275 (Pp 64), with a full account in Paragraphs 539 (Pp 122), 774 (Pp 184/5), and parallels.

2. cited in Jemison T.H., Ellen G. White Writings Today Ellen G. White Publications (Washington D.C. (undated)) Pp 8.

## 7. Dangerous Statements Due To Contextual Quotation

Health fanatics and extremists can, somehow, find these in every compilation; every sourcebook; even in original manuscripts. However, on the assumption that neither the reader nor your writer fall into that category, what could there be in healthful living that could be dangerous? The book doesn't exactly abound with statements of this <sup>with</sup> calibre, but, when poorly referenced and inappropriate contexts cause statements to be taken literally, then one or two become apparent. A typical example could be the following: "The artificial hair (wigs) and pads (bolstered hats) covering the base of the brain heat and excite the spinal nerves centering in the brain. The head should be ever kept cool. The heat caused by these artificial coverings induces blood to the brain. The action... tends to recklessness in morals..."

(Health Reformer - undated). Emphasis supplied.<sup>1</sup> In a study done by your writer in 1974 it was revealed, in one section, that 39.42 per cent of body heat loss is through the unclad head. Covering the head (depending on the type and insular properties of the covering) can reduce this loss to from 3.5% to

1. Health Reformer Pp 185 Paragraph



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less than  $\frac{1}{2}\%$ .<sup>1</sup> One of the primary conclusions of the study reveals that the best conservation and protection in keeping the body warm is, in addition to regular coverings, to cover the other extremital heat loss areas—vis. wrists, ankles, and in particular the head. In cold weather—such as prevails in that part of U.S.A.—it is extremely dangerous to literally interpret the Spirit of Prophecy as saying to “keep the head cool.” Once again <sup>the original</sup> context solves what could be a potential problem.

### 8. Unauthenticated Statements.

It is indeed unfortunate that unless we can find a reference for reputed E.G. White statements because there are so many “snippets” around, we must consider it un-authentic until proven otherwise, and treat its use and propagation in that respect. This doesn't necessarily mean that she didn't write it, it merely means that it can not be proved that she did. Rather than suggest that Healthful Living used non-E.G. White source material, I will use as examples two papers that have been

<sup>1</sup> L.D.C. Hartley “Heat loss — DuBois & DuBois Body Surface Area”, Christchurch School of Nursing (Burwood Hospital New Zealand) 1974. (Unpublished) Pp 3.  
(DuBois & DuBois formula —  $Sq. Cm = Wgt^{0.425} \times Height^{0.725} \times 71.84$ )

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read in churches, copied into bible flyleaves, and handed along from person to person in various typed and handwritten forms.

The first, entitled "The preparation of the entertainment of the saints ascending," (and various similar titles), states (in various wordings) that the representatives from different parts of the universe are preparing for the entertainment of the saints (the "redeemed" or sometimes the "144,000 redeemed") who will spend a sabbath on a planet (sometimes named in reports—various names) during their seven-day ascension to the sea of glass. It is reported that she said that fruit is being gathered together from different worlds—in fact from the entire universe, in anticipation of this supersabbath feast. The statement is purported to be a stenographic report of a conversation in the home of Ellen G. White over the dinner table, shortly after her first vision was published in 1846.

The only account in any of her writings that substantiates any of this (and only a small part of it) may be found in Early Writings pp 13-16.

"As God has shown me the travels of the advent people to the Holy City and the rich reward to be given to those who wait the return of their Lord from the wedding, it may be my duty to give you a short sketch of what God has revealed to me... Jesus' silver trumpet sounded, as He descended on the cloud,

wrapped in flames of fire.... We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of Glass, when Jesus brought the crowns, and with His own right hand placed them on our heads.<sup>1</sup> No mention is made in this or other statements referring to the ~~ascension~~<sup>entertainment</sup> of the redeemed of the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

The second statement, entitled "The Last Mediatorial Work of Christ or "Christ's Last Work in The Sanctuary" or "Parents Prayers Presented By Christ" (depending upon whose copy you refer to.), refers to the very last thing that Christ is said to do before He lays down his Priestly robe. (Hebrew 2:25) ei: He will present the special prayers of the parents whose children have backslidden from the fold; — thousands of children — although backslidden, remember their earlier training and return to the fold in time for the close of probation (Ecclesiaster 12:1; Proverbs 6:20-23, 30, 31.) What a wonderful & precious promise and assurance this would be to parents if in fact Sr White either saw or wrote it. Reference for this statement is variously given as R+H 1890, or R+H 1898, or R+H 1912, etc, although no specific dates or page numbers. Even in

1. Early Writings Review & Herald Publishing Association (Washington D.C. 1925) Pp 13-16.
2. Early Writings Pp 287-288, Great Controversy Pp 645-646, Testimonies Vol 9 Pp 286-288

the 3 Volume Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White and the Index to ECW's Periodical Articles no reference is made to a promise of this nature. Sr White makes many references to the prayers of parents for their children, but none mentions this last meditational act.<sup>1</sup>

In conclusion, then, I would like to mention again the comment I made in my introduction when I said that I would not be compiling a set of <sup>interpreting</sup> rules as such. I do trust that you have been able to see each of these in turn, and as a whole in retrospect. Therefore, in closing, I would firstly refer you to the appendices in the back of the essay which will tie in your comprehension of the book Healthful Living to the counsel you have been able to formulate for yourself, and finally I would let Ellen G. White have the last word. "And now to all who have a desire for truth I would say: do not give credence to any unauthenticated reports as to what Sister White has done or said or written. If you desire to know what the Lord has revealed through her, read her

<sup>1</sup> see Adventist Home Pp 205-7, Testimonies Vol 2 Pp 274-5, Vol 5 Pp 323, Vol 6 Pp 401, Counsels to Teachers Pp 156 and Fundamentals of Christian Education Pp 161, Index Pp 2104-2127.

See also statements by A.L. White on these Unauthenticated Statements (Bibliography)

published works.

Are there any points of interest concerning which she has not written, do not eagerly catch up and report rumours as to what she has said." 1.

1. Testimonies for the Church  
Volume 5 Pp 696 (Refer whole chapter entitled "Unfounded Reports.")

## Bibliography

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esp. 43-C-18
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3. Jenison, T.H. Ellen G. White Writings Today, Ellen G White Publications (undated) Washington D.C.
4. White Arthur L. Comments on Last Meditatorial Work of Christ and Entertainment of Ascending Saints, both E.G. White Publications (Washington D.C. Feb 22, 1960 and Oct 1963 respectively).
5. White E.G. Adventist Home, Southern Publishing Co (Tennessee 1952)

- 21.
- 6 White, Ellen G. Early Writings Review + Herald Publishing Association (Washington DC 1925)
- 7 " Education. Southern Publishing Co (TENNESSEE) 1925)
- 8 " The Great Controversy Pacific Press (California 1975)
- 9 " Fundamentals of Christian Education Southern Publishing Co (TENNESSEE 1923)
- 10 " Healthful Living (3rd Ed) Medical Missionary Board (Michigan 1898)
- 11 " Ministry of Healing Pacific Press (California 1974)
- 12 " INDEX to the Writings of E.G. White (3 Volumes) Pacific Press (California 1962)
- 13 " Selected Messages (Books 1 + 2) Review & Herald Publishing Association (Washington D.C. 1958)
- 14 " Testimonies for the Church (9 Volumes) Pacific Press (California 1948)

## 22. Appendix One.

### Inadequate referencing in Healthful Living:

1. U.T. (no date) stands for Unpublished Testimonies up until the time of compiling the book Healthful Living (1898). Occurs 10 times.
2. U.T. 1888 - Unpublished Testimonies 1888, but no month or day. 26 Manuscripts were written in 1888, numbered 1-8a, 8b-25. Healthful Living makes two References to Feb. 1. 1888 (Paragraphs 1124, 1125 on Pp 267/8) and occurs all other references simply list U.T. 1888. (10 times)
3. S.T. (Undated.) - the rather copious Special Testimonies to Ministers And Workers (now under the heading Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers (compiled - Posthumously - 1923). (once)
4. H.R. - Health Reformer - a Magazine currently in issue at the time of publication - each issue dated.. (Appears 106 times.)
5. R.H. - appears only once (Paragraph 281 Pp 65) this could be a typographical error for Health Reformer (H.R.) as the reference for Review and Herald, its nearest similitude, is R.&H.

Unsubstantiated References in Healthful Living1) Health Reformers:

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