

Our Moses Part I

Background

In the SDA church we have our own founder, prophet and inspirer who has strongly influenced and shaped our church for more than a century. Ellen G. White was truly a woman of God! She devoted her life fully to God, to the church and was led by the Holy Spirit in a powerful way. She was eager to study and pray, to understand the Word of God, and to receive wisdom from Him.

She would very likely be the first one to go to a prayer meeting or join a Bible study. She was open for new light and eager to test new interpretations of the Bible. She prayed for wisdom and trusted the Holy Spirit's leading more than "theological interpretation tools." She believed in the increasing light and told us to be open-minded. In other words – there is nothing wrong with "our Moses" either (see previous newsletter!).

But still, I believe, something has gone wrong over the years. Is it possible that what was described in the previous newsletter has happened with our prophetic heritage as well? Has a selection process taken place over the years, which has not been healthy or balanced? Have we also stiffened in the form and become inflexible? Do we also have a tendency to reject advancing truth for the same reasons?

This newsletter and the previous ones indicate that this is the case. If that is the true situation, the biggest question we have to ask ourselves is *how* we should proceed. What is the "medicine" we should take to be able to continue? How can we grow and at the same time stay away from deceptions?

Gold Standard

First, we have to determine that what constitutes our "gold standard." A belief system can be compared to a building with its foundation. The selection of foundation is therefore of utmost importance. If the foundation is weak the building gets cracks, which will get worse with time. If the foundation is solid no storms can move or destroy the building, Matthew 7:24-27. The choice of foundation will also determine the final appearance of the building.

In our church there are some who believe in the Bible and the Bible only. The believers in this group are not in 100% unity! With this I mean that they don't believe exactly the same thing. There are others who devote most of their time to E.G. White's writings and consequently have them as their primary guideline. Even this group is not homogeneous and has different understandings and lifestyles.

But the large majority consider themselves to have a combination of both. They believe in the authority of the Bible and at the same time in the authority of E.G. White and feel comfortable with that. The reason is simply that they have not found any significant problem with having two sources of authority.

Let's Be Practical

With these three options we need to be aware of the following problems. Let's be practical and consider some real issues. If you belong to the group where your creed is the Bible – everything, of course, must be proven from the Scripture. Whatever comes up for discussion or study, the Bible has the last word. It does not matter what E. G White, any theologian, conference president, pastor, etc. may say. If the Bible is clear, the believer will stand firm, even if that sometimes is easier said than done!

On the other hand if your creed is E.G. White – every doctrine, issue, and discovery must be checked with her

writings. Whatever the issue is, she has the last word! Whether the Bible is clear on the studied issue or not, she decides what the truth is! It does not matter whether the issue was relevant or well understood at her time or not. The only thing that matters is what *she* said.

But what about the third option? In this option *both* the Bible and E.G. White are the gold standard. When you have read something good from the Bible and it appears clear, you just accept it. Sounds fine! Sometime later you read something special from E.G. White; it sounds good and spiritual and you accept it. Later on you find something good in the Bible and you add that to your collection of spiritual wisdom. This goes on and on and if studies are not too deeply performed, this situation can go on forever. After a while you have a smorgasbord of hobbyhorses.

In the Long Run

At first the last option appears to be the best choice, but the question is whether it will hold in the long run. If deeper studies take place, every honest seeker will find some problems. The total picture starts to look patchy and some controversies surface. The next paragraph contains reactions I have heard over the years.

“Well, if we don’t put too much emphasis on the controversies, everything is okay,” seems to be a dominant opinion. “Don’t think about it and if you do, you will soon leave the faith,” is another view! Others might say, “Don’t be so critical!” “Since our leaders know best and have the best of educations why even worry?” “Everybody seems to be happy with the current situation – so who do you think you are?” Comments like these are common!

I personally believe that the situation with dual authority is very dangerous! In the long run it will undermine the faith of those who are seeking the truth. It also has a potential to scare newcomers away because of inconsistencies. We need to know what our foundation is, be so sure about it that nothing will ever rock our boat. We have times ahead of us where the boat truly will be rocked and only those who have a solid foundation in Jesus Christ will make it. Below I have tried in an honest way to distinguish the differences between the Bible and E.G. White. Every Spirit-led author or preacher could also fit to “her” group. Please ponder the differences when you consider the two options!

The Bible as the Creed

There is a tremendous potential for a growing understanding of the Bible, which will keep us busy for eternity, where Jesus will be the teacher.

Is deep and mysterious.

The truth needs to be studied and the light will gradually shine brighter and brighter.

The Bible is inexhaustible.

The Holy Spirit is definitely needed to understand Scripture. Without the Spirit, we are lost!

E.G. White as the Creed

Since her books are a written testimony of the “present truth” at the time when she lived, they provide very little growing potential.

Is simple and plain.

The “lesser light” will always be the “lesser light.” Since her writings are straightforward the “lesser light” usually shines right away.

Her writings were “top of the line” a good one hundred years ago and there is not much more to be discovered.

Anyone can read it and be blessed at once.

This is not done with the intention to harm E.G. White, but to place her where *she* wanted to be. It is done to lift up, glorify, and adore the Bible! Jesus Christ *is* the Word of God! The true light in the hands of common people will through the empowering of the Holy Spirit have a strong potential to shine brighter. Without the empowering of the Holy Spirit, this process *cannot* take place.

We also need to realize that if a growth process does *not* take place, there is a problem with the believers! Everyone who is eager to seek and to follow the truth needs a constant and intimate relationship with both The Word and The Spirit. That guarantees a healthy spiritual growth!

The Bible as the Creed

If we decide that the Bible is our only creed, every statement from E.G. White must be checked with the Bible. Every statement from E.G. White that stands the test of today's historical, archaeological and theological knowledge, and is in agreement with the Bible, is still "present truth." Everything that does not stand the test is not "present truth." It implies that we do not only have the right but also the duty to check every single statement of E.G. White's and, of course, any other author's with the Bible.

Every statement in her books that we regard and uphold must be in 100% harmony with the "Word of God," which is the Bible. Each doctrine must be in total agreement with Jesus Christ, who is the "Truth." If the end product differs from the Bible, some evolving process has taken place and we are in for a deception.

E.G. White's Writings as the Creed

On the other hand if E.G. White's writings are the gold standard, every Bible passage must be checked with her writings before a correct understanding is found. It does not matter whether the Bible is obvious in its presentation or not. To me, this is the definition of a cult!

Two Creeds

The third option would be that we blend the information from the Bible and E.G. White. With this attitude we have no rule of faith. There is no firm foundation! This is often found in a Sabbath School class. One member leans on a Bible quotation; another on an E.G. White statement, a third sees light in the Bible from E.G. White's view and tries to make a compromise. A fourth tries to see light in E.G. White's writings from a biblical perspective. Often nothing is achieved! Even with the best intentions, it seems to be a "religious" show! We are playing church!

When different viewpoints have been presented no one knows how to proceed. No one has the courage or authority to emphasize ONE gold standard. By not doing that, no one grows in knowledge and understanding. Most Sabbath school classes are therefore a roadblocks!

That is why today many Sabbath School classes are a forum for people's opinions. It is not a Bible study any longer. The quarterly does not encourage new light but cements the current views of the church, which is the same as to further status quo. Who has the authority to make a decision in that scenario? The same state of indecision as found in a Sabbath school class can be seen within our whole denominational system.

The Author's Suggestion

A cancer in the beginning is harmless and barely noticeable. But as time goes the cancer grows and eventually it becomes a serious threat! If nothing curative is done, death will follow. The same picture can be used in the spiritual world. The more time that passes the bigger and riskier is the surgery!

We need to make a decision *today* that clearly defines our creed without destroying our inheritance. Total honesty is needed without any compromises! If we want to be blessed and be ready for the "latter rain," we have to make this decision *now* before it is too late. Therefore, I suggest the following:

1. The Bible and the Bible alone is our creed. Everything must be checked with the Bible, which is the Word of God and has indisputable and supreme authority. That means that anything that is *not* according to the Word is *not* from God!
2. E.G. White was a true prophet of God and truly led by the Holy Spirit. Everything that she received from God **IS** in full harmony with the Word of God. The Word of God and the Spirit of God are ONE and will *always* be ONE!
3. If this unity between E.G. White and the Bible cannot be found, that specific information in her books is **NOT** from God and must be discarded!

If this concept is acknowledged by the Seventh-day Adventist church, it must be **STRONGLY** proclaimed to all our members over and over again. It must also be made clear to the world!

If these statements are accepted, the course will be clear. The issue of authority is settled and a harmonious balance will be found. God is honored and His Word, the Bible, has undeniable authority and power. Nothing can take the place of the Scriptures. Who wants to belittle the Word anyway? That would be the same as to belittle Jesus Christ! We must revere the Bible and will be blessed by studying it.

We need to trust the Spirit of God and allow Him to continually lead us into all truth, John 16:13. When we do, we are “one” with God and His infinite power. Nothing stands in between us and our Maker. Spiritual growth takes place and makes us ready for Jesus’ second coming.

Due to the length of this newsletter, it has been split into several parts.

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