

University of Alberta

The Role of Dissent in the Creation of Seventh-day Adventist Identity

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in

partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in

Religious Studies

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Fall, 2009

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

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Abstract

This thesis studies the benefits that a religious organization acquires from its identification of, and reaction to, “deviants” within it. If an organization is to continue growing while still maintaining a unique identity, periodically it must have deviant movements within it. Theoretically, I apply insights from sociologists of deviance (particularly Durkheim and Erikson) about the functional benefits of deviance labeling for several aspects of group functioning, such as beliefs and the means of disseminating them, structure and hierarchy, internal policies, and leadership styles.

I studied the Seventh-day Adventist organization, applying Festinger’s cognitive dissonance theory to it, in order to better illuminate its history and reaction to dissenters. I focused on three Adventist dissenters; Dudley Canright, John Harvey Kellogg, and the threat posed by Ellet J. Waggoner and Alonzo T. Jones, showing how the organization reinforced its boundaries and maintained control of its members by identifying and punishing these supposed deviants.

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Introduction

“To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the *silencing of dissent*, know that you are on the wrong side of history...” (Obama, 2009: 11 italics added).

In his inaugural address, President Barack Obama expressed an idea that Emile Durkheim (1895: 67) had stated over 100 years earlier; dissent is an important and vital part of any healthy society, and that those who attempt to silence it may in fact be damaging the very society they think they are defending. While nations like North Korea,¹ China, Myanmar, or South Africa under apartheid immediately come to mind as targets for Obama’s words regarding the repression of dissidents, foreign nations are certainly not the only social groups capable of acts designed to silence dissenting voices.² In the history of the United States, as recently as the twentieth century, American repression of dissidents such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement or student protests against the Vietnam War symbolize the failed policies of governmental attempts at silencing dissent.

The history of religion offers other views of dissident repression. The inquisition of the Middle Ages, the Anabaptist repression in Germany, and early Puritan and Quaker suppression in England (as well as the Puritan suppression of Quakers in New England) are only a few examples of attempted repression of

¹ See Chol-Hwan Kang’s *The Aquariums of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag* (2000).

² North Korean human rights atrocities against dissidents are so well catalogued by various media outlets that I will not give examples, and one need only remember the Chinese government’s crackdown on dissidents in Tiananmen Square or their repression of the Falun Gong organization to find examples of Chinese dissident suppression. In South Africa, the ruling party eventually murdered dissident Stephen Biko who spoke out against apartheid. Myanmar has kept pro-democracy advocate and dissident leader Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest since 1989.

religious dissent. These repressions, however, all failed to silence the dissident movements. The inquisition failed to silence dissenting members (heretics) and eventually led to the Protestant Reformation, while the persecution of the Anabaptists gave added fuel to the Reformation under Martin Luther. As Kai Erikson demonstrated in *Wayward Puritans* (1966) the Puritan repression of Quakers in New England in the seventeenth century eventually contributed to the acceptance of religious toleration in the United States, something the Puritans firmly rejected and fought hard to defeat. These South African, American, and religious organizational examples represent one possible social response to dissent – initial persecution followed in time by an incorporation of the dissenting opinion into social life and a renegotiation of identity boundaries.

Although society may or may not eventually incorporate a dissenting opinion, the act of dissent is vital for societal health. Therefore, I propose that the act of dissent and societies' response to it may be as important as the actual content of the dissenting opinion. I also believe that society has at least three responses to dissent. The first is the silencing of dissent (through censure, incarceration, banishment from the group, or in extreme cases capital punishment) and a refusal to incorporate or entertain any of the dissenting opinions into its self-identity. The second response is one in which society initially rejects the dissenting opinion and initially punishes or suppresses the expression(s) of dissent, yet over time renegotiates its identity to include the dissenting opinion. Finally, society may co-opt dissent and thereby disarm it, by incorporating the dissenting opinion within its identity framework.

This current work will show that dissent is a necessary component of group identity formation. In my research I study the benefits that an established religious organization acquires from its identification of, and reaction to, ‘deviants’ (dissenters) within it. In order for a religious organization to continue growing numerically and theologically while still maintaining a belief in its own distinct identity and beliefs, periodically it must have deviant movements (or dissident members) in its midst. For the purpose of this thesis, I have chosen the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) organization as a case study. The SDA organization arose in the aftermath of the Millerite disappointment of the mid nineteenth century in the United States under the leadership of self – proclaimed prophet, Ellen White. Commentators differ over how precisely to classify the Adventist organization since it holds a majority of its belief system in common with the larger Protestant community, yet encompasses features common to both cults³ and sects.⁴ For the purpose of this study, I will refer to Seventh-day

³ According to Stark and Bainbridge, cults represent a deviant religious tradition within society. Cult movements attempt to satisfy all the religious needs of their members and forbid adherents to have dual membership with any other religious body. Often, a spiritual medium guides the cult movement (1985: 28- 29). Earlier, Stark and Bainbridge (1987: 156, 157) said that cults are a deviant religious tradition with novel beliefs and practices. Therefore, cult formation is a two step process. The first step is the invention of new religious ideas. The second step involves gaining social acceptance for the new ideas to the extent of creating a group that adheres to them. The SDA organization believes it provides the most comprehensive interpretation of scripture available and has uncovered spiritual “truths” that other organizations have failed to understand. Therefore the leaders of the SDA organization believe the organization can best satisfy the religious needs of its adherents. Ellen White was as spiritual medium who guided the organization throughout her life and whose writings continue to guide it.

⁴ According to Stark and Bainbridge, while both sects and cults are in a high state of tension with the surrounding sociocultural environment, sects have a prior tie with another religious organization. In order to be a sect, a religious movement must have been founded by persons who left another religious body for the purpose of founding the sect. Sects left the “old” faith, not to begin a new faith, but to reestablish the old since they see the old organization drifting from the fundamental truths it once held. Sects claim to be refurbished or purified versions of the faith from which they split. Because sects attempt to restore aspects of practice and doctrine from which the parent body has allegedly drifted, sect families bear rather close resemblances to each other in terms of theology and worship forms (Stark and Bainbridge, 1985: 25- 26; 138).

Adventism as a religious organization, although sociologists Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge conducted some of the most thorough research on religious sects, cults, and denominations and concluded that the Seventh-day Adventist organization was a religious sect (Stark and Bainbridge, 1981: 138).⁵

In *Wayward Puritans* (1966), sociologist Kai Erikson developed the theme of group identity through suppression of deviance and applied it to Puritan settlements in Massachusetts during the seventeenth century. Erikson wrote that deviant acts create a sense of mutuality among the people of a community by supplying a focus for group feelings. Deviance makes people more alert to the interests they share in common and draws attention to those values that constitute the collective conscience of the community (Erikson, 1966: 4).

Erikson used Emile Durkheim's work on society and deviance as the basis for his work, a fact that Erikson acknowledged at the beginning of his book (1966: 4). Based on Durkheim's *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895: 67), Erikson said that crime (and by extension other forms of deviance such as dissent) was a natural sort of social activity and was an integral part of all healthy societies. Deviance performed a needed service to society by drawing the members of a given society together, and unless occasional moments of deviant behavior

⁵ Stark and Bainbridge said that sects began in a state of tension with their environment. They also said that there were different levels of tension between the sect and the environment based on three interacting components. First was the difference in beliefs, norms, and behaviors between the sect and its surrounding environment. Second was the level of antagonism these differences generate between the group and surrounding environment and third was the level of separation between the two to which this antagonism led. Sects that remained in a high state of tension long after their initial founding included the Seventh-day Adventist organization (There are two levels of higher tension that Stark and Bainbridge identify - groups that ranked as "very high" or "extreme" - experience greater friction with their environment than do SDAs [Stark and Bainbridge, 1981: 138]).

punctuate the rhythm of group life, presumably, social organization would be impossible (Erikson, 1966: 3–4).

According to Durkheim, the voices of the collective are more forceful (dominant) than an individual voice, “Society acts against dissent through moral censure and physical repression, thus strengthening its dominance and reaffirming its shared convictions” (Durkheim, 1912: 209–210). Durkheim also said that when a person denies or questions a shared belief, society forbids the denial (Durkheim, 1912: 215). The SDA organization has an extensive history of dissenting voices and acts to identify and punish those supposed deviants. In this project I show how the Adventist organization reinforces its boundaries and maintains control of its members by discrediting dissenters, and I will explore how these dissenting voices are integral to the maintenance of SDA boundaries as both Durkheim and Erikson suggest. I chose the SDA organization as a case study because during its 150 years of existence, it has experienced numerous eruptions of dissenting voices and schismatic movements. Dissenters in Adventism have challenged the organization’s theology, its organizational structure, and the organization’s right to exist. Adventist self-identity, the nature of three historical deviant movements within Adventism that challenged this identity, and the group’s reaction to these dissidents form the basis of my research.

In order to understand the theoretical framework of the deviant/social group matrix, it is important to understand both the development of the Adventist identity and the dissenters who rose to challenge this identity. In Chapter One I

use cognitive dissonance theory (developed by Leon Festinger in 1957) to provide a better understanding of how and why Seventh-day Adventist identity developed as it did. Using the insights garnered from cognitive dissonance theory in this chapter, I trace the formation of SDA group identity as it emerged from the Millerite phenomenon of mid nineteenth century America. While discussing cognitive dissonance, I focus on Adventists' interpretation of scripture, their allegations of divine leading through their own prophet, and their isolationist theology towards all other Christian organizations.

During its formative years, the SDA organization faced many dissenters, and in Chapter Two I examine three of them: Dudley Canright, who initially was a minister and leader in the organization; John Harvey Kellogg, the leading health reformer in the organization; and Alonzo T. Jones and Ellet J. Waggoner, two Adventist ministers who together challenged specific Adventist doctrines and leadership. In Chapter Two I explore these three deviant movements within early Adventism from the perspective of deviant theory developed by both Emile Durkheim and Kai T. Erikson. This examination of Durkheim's initial understanding of the necessity of deviance for a secular society and the work of Kai T. Erikson in adapting and applying Durkheim's work to the Puritan settlements in New England in the seventeenth century illuminates how the dissident movements within Adventism helped to shape SDA identity. While both Durkheim and Erikson used the term "deviance" in their analysis, their analysis of deviance can help us understand 'dissent' and a social group's reaction

to dissent since the idea of nonconforming behaviour includes both deviance and dissent.⁶

Chapter Three is comprised of an analysis of official SDA responses and reactions to these three dissenters and how these reactions show a connection between cognitive dissonance theory and the theory of deviance. While this study intends to stay firmly rooted in historical Adventism, in this chapter I make brief references to more current SDA identity in order to show how in at least one area, Seventh – day Adventists have renegotiated their identity boundaries to include the dissenting opinion long after they silenced the dissenters.

In this chapter I also show connections between cognitive dissonance theory and the theory of dissent. Using these connections, I show how dissenters play a vital role in the maintenance of group identity by reintroducing the element of cognitive dissonance back into the collective group identity. This reintroduction of cognitive dissonance into group processes, forces the group to once again deal with the dissonant issues that generated the initial group identity. The group can either reaffirm this identity or modify it to accommodate some or all of the dissenting opinions. Finally, in Chapter Four, I draw conclusions from the study and suggest implications for group identity in the face of dissenting opinions.

⁶ Robert K. Merton said that nonconforming deviant behaviour differs from aberrant deviant behaviour because the nonconformist announced his/her dissent publicly. Merton went on to say that the religious dissenter insists on making his/her dissent known to as many as will listen while the aberrant criminal seeks to avoid the limelight (Merton, 1971: 829- 830). In his discussion on deviant behaviour, Merton used the ideas of dissent and deviance interchangeably and applied deviance theory to dissenting persons. Later in the same chapter, Merton said that social norms can differ in their elasticity, sometimes allowing much leeway before persons define a belief deviant (1971: 833). Here again, Merton was applying deviant theory to dissenting belief systems and not exclusively to criminal or deviant acts.

A Comment on Methodology and Sources

Research for this thesis consisted of analyzing textual sources relating to the history and development of the SDA organization, the cultural and religious milieu of the mid nineteenth century (especially related to the north eastern United States), the specific dissident movements with Adventism, and theoretical works related to Leon Festinger's model of cognitive dissonance and Emile Durkheim and Kai Erikson's work on the theory of deviance and social formation.

I devote a large section of the first chapter to William Miller and the Millerite movement, because Adventism was a direct descendent of the Millerite movement and continues to identify itself in light of William Miller's millennial teachings. Leon Festinger (1956), Bull and Lockhart (1989), and others have conducted research into the Millerite phenomenon using various theoretical models, and my research neither challenges that work, nor reproduces it. Instead, I will use cognitive dissonance theory as a way of explaining how and why SDA identity emerged out of the movement that William Miller began.

Many of the original source documents, which provided the majority of information related to the formation of the SDA organization as well as the dissident movements within it, contain a biased perspective relative to the viewpoint of the author(s). It is, therefore, important to be aware of, and take into consideration, these biases in order to discover the underlying themes. The writings of Ellen G. White (1827 – 1915), the alleged prophet of the Seventh-day Adventist organization, provide a valuable resource for the study of Adventist belief systems and identity. For every Seventh-day Adventist, her writings

constitute “a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.”⁷ While Ellen White claimed her books provided an “inspired” view of history, world events, and biblical interpretation because of what God had shown her in her alleged visions, I suggest that her books tend to give an Adventist-centric view of history and contain suspect biblical interpretation as well as inaccurate historical details.

Many of the source books on SDA history, beliefs, and identity formation come from Seventh-day Adventist authors and provide overviews of various dissenters within the SDA organization. These sources paint the dissenters as either theologically, socially, or spiritually deviant, and vindicate the position of the organization. These sources characterize organizational leadership as bent on reconciliation while concurrently portraying dissenters as unwilling to compromise or reconcile. SDA authors also use Ellen White as an authoritative source and do not question her prophetic status nor the validity or content of her alleged visions.

While SDA scholars and historians wrote many of the books about the dissidents, these dissenters wrote several books of their own. Dissident authors attribute altruistic motives to the dissenters and narcissistic motives to SDA leaders. Several books by dissenting authors, such as those by Dudley Canright, have a sarcastic tone and tend to view SDAs as poor biblical exegetes who refuse to acknowledge the superior arguments and exegesis of the dissenters. Despite the biases of both official Seventh-day Adventist and dissenting sources, taken

⁷ Seventh-day Adventist fundamental belief #18. Adventist fundamental beliefs are available on the official S.D.A. website, <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>.

together, they may offer a balanced and comprehensive overview of the Seventh-day Adventist organization and the early dissenters that challenged Adventist identity.

According to Durkheim:

A society is not constituted simply by the mass of individuals who comprise it, the ground they occupy, the things they use, or the movements they make, but above all, by the idea it has of itself (Durkheim, 1912: 425).

The formation of SDA identity and the role that dissent has played in this formation bears out Durkheim's analysis. In order to become a distinct body with clearly defined boundaries that separated it from the rest of the world, the Seventh-day Adventist organization needed to remind itself continually of its "special" status. Dissenters gave the SDA organization the opportunity to reinforce its boundaries, through the reintroduction of cognitive dissonance, and in doing so reaffirm its idea of itself.

Chapter 1: The Formation of Seventh-day Adventist Identity as a Strategy
for Cognitive Dissonance Reduction

The creation of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) organization did not happen “ex nihilo.” Many factors contributed to the rise of the SDA organization as it began in the mid nineteenth century in upstate New York. The nineteenth century in American history, especially as evidenced in the Northeastern United States, or what some scholars refer to as “the burned over district” (Cross, 1950) reveals a nation in the throes of religious fervor. The “burned over district” acquired its name as the result of successive religious revival fires that swept the area, focusing primarily on the perfection of humanity and his ability to achieve millennial happiness (Cross, 1950: 3). In this area, a person could discover every type of religious sentiment. Historian Winthrop S. Hudson described the burned over district as follows.

[It was] the area in which tendencies of conventional established religion came into most direct and intimate conflict with these of enthusiastic religion. [Because] of its geographical location and relatively late period of settlement, it was an area in [diverse] people, intermingled on more equal terms and in a more intimate way that was true elsewhere in the country. This created tensions between accustomed patterns of life, heightened religious anxieties, and produced inner conflicts [that] were resolved and sometimes imploded in diverse and often surprising ways. The religious revivals of upstate New York were symptomatic of social tensions existing through the nation (Hudson, 1974: 6)

Hudson's statement suggests that the concentration of such intense religious ferment in such a small area produced many divisions in many of the mainline Protestant groups, as well as the formation of various new religious groups (such as Seventh-day Adventists [Hudson, 1974: 7]). Therefore, the formation of the SDA organization began in a world in which millennialism, spiritualism, and revivalism provided the modes of expression (and perhaps the impetus) for this religious ferment and the formation of alternative religions,⁸ and Adventism appealed to the mentality that was prevalent in the area (Cross, 1950: 288).

Millennialism

Millennialism was a common feature of the revivals that swept the burned over district during the mid nineteenth century and it greatly influenced William Miller, the spiritual father of the SDA movement as well as Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon Church (Rowe, 2008: 143). In Christian traditions, millennialism,⁹ involves the triumph of Christ [over evil], the vindication of the suffering saints [who suffer at the hands of this same evil], and the eventual reign of Christ on the earth (Sandeen, 1974: 105). During the Great Awakening, a period of intense religious revival in the United States beginning in the mid eighteenth century, many religious leaders felt the God was leading the world into the millennium (Bushman, 1984: 37). While many variations exist on this theme,

⁸ In the introduction to Edwin S. Gaustad's anthology *The Rise of Adventism* (1974) Gaustad argued that communal living along with millennialism, spiritualism, and revivalism, also should factor into the rise of Adventism. Since Adventists did not adopt a strong communal living arrangement such as the various communes of the Shakers or the Oneida experiment that were contemporary movements of Adventism, I have chosen to avoid discussing communal living and have instead focused on the other three forces that directly influenced Millerite and eventually Adventist, identity.

⁹ Sandeen defined millennialism as "the cosmology of eschatology, a chronology of future events comparable to the historical record of the past" (Sandeen, 1974: 104)

millennialism has a long history that continues today.¹⁰ In nineteenth century America, however, millennialism reached a crescendo in the teaching of William Miller. Miller taught that Christ would return to earth in either 1843 or 1844 and that his return would usher in the millennium (Froom, 1971: 65). Using the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation to give his message validity, Miller followed in a millenarian tradition that had its roots in the earliest days of Christianity.

The author of the biblical book of Daniel provided some of the earliest millennial predictions upon which Christianity drew. In that book, the author predicted an apocalyptic millenarian return of God to save the Jews (Sandeen, 1974: 106) and Miller used the book of Daniel in support of his claims.¹¹ Sandeen (1974: 107) claimed the main theme of Revelation, the final book of the biblical canon and another book that Miller used in his apocalyptic predictions, was the apocalyptic millennial return of Christ to save the early Christians from the persecution that the Roman Emperor Nero was inflicting on them. These and other biblical themes of the return of Christ to usher in the millennium were present not only in biblical literature, but continued in the thinking of many mainline Christian denominations as well as various sects throughout history.

¹⁰ Anthropologists have recorded examples of millenarian beliefs among the Indians of the western planes and immediately following WWII among the natives of New Guinea in what has become known as 'cargo cults' (Sandeen, 1974: 106-107). Other millenarian groups include the Jehovah's Witness movement that has withstood a decade of failed millennial expectation (Zygmunt, 2000: 66; Schmalz, 2000: 235-247), and the Baha'i Under the Provision of the Covenant movement that predicted a nuclear war beginning in 1980 that would lead to a millennium in which all survivors would embrace the Baha'i faith and live in peace (Balch et al, 2000: 130-139).

¹¹ Daniel 2 contains the interpretation of a dream that culminates in the millennial kingdom of God set up on the earth. Daniel 7 and 12 also contain apocalyptic images that culminate in the salvation of the saints and the institution of the kingdom of God. William Miller drew upon these chapters as he formulated his views regarding the return of Christ in 1843/1844.

In the sixteenth century, the Anabaptists in Munster, Germany, saw a connection between the New Testament apocalypse of Revelation and their own situation. The Anabaptists believed that the events unfolding around the city of Munster were the beginning of the institution of the Kingdom of God on the earth that signaled the beginning of the millennial reign of Christ (Bax, 1903: 162–163; Sandeen, 1974: 107). At the end of the civil war in England in the mid seventeenth century, a millennial movement known as the Fifth Monarchy Men proclaimed Christ as the head of England. Later, in the nineteenth century, British millenarians believed God had judged the earth, found it wanting, and that a cataclysmic judgment was imminent. These British Millenarians expected the next great apocalyptic event to happen between 1843 and 1844 (Sandeen, 1974: 107, 109). British Millenarians, however, did not specify what the next great apocalyptic event would be, nor did they give specific dates for the occurrence, as William Miller did.

Millenarianism revived among biblical scholars near the end of the eighteenth century when Napoleon temporarily dethroned the Pope. These biblical scholars equated Napoleon's act with the "deadly wound" of the "first beast" predicted in the biblical book of Revelation (Little, 2004: 177-179; Sandeen, 1974: 108). Therefore, we can see that Miller's teachings were part of a long history of millennial expectations and would not have seemed out of place in nineteenth century America. When Miller began to proclaim his millennial message, he found an audience ready to listen to, and accept, his predictions.

While millenarian ideas laid a basis for the religious excitement of America in the nineteenth century, spiritualism and revivalism were concrete expressions of this excitement. Spiritualism and revivalism are important to an understanding of William Miller, later SDA preachers, and the visions and otherworldly communications that marked the alleged prophetic role of Ellen White, the spiritual leader of the SDA organization.

Spiritualism

Cornell University Professor R. Laurence Moore marks the mid nineteenth century as the beginning of spiritualism in the United States, which began when the Fox Sisters began their alleged spiritual activities in New York (Moore, 1974: 79).¹² Spiritualism refers to the belief that the living can communicate with the souls of the dead, and this was a prevalent belief in the religious milieu of the burned-over district (Moore, 1974: 85). Although this definition may appear to disqualify the likes of Mormon founder Joseph Smith and Adventist prophet Ellen White from spiritualistic activity because both claimed to be in contact with living entities such as Jesus and/or angels, it is important to note that Christian Spiritualists did exist.¹³ In these Christian spiritualist “meetings” (séances), the Spirits taught some version of the divinity of Christ (Moore, 1974: 82). Whether Smith, White, and others were in fact spiritualists is not the thrust of this thesis, but it is important to note that their alleged contact with entities outside of the

¹² The Fox sisters of Rochester N.Y., were responsible for a movement which numbered close to 11 million followers in one form or another twenty years after their initial alleged spirit contacts (Brandon, 1983: 14, 15, 37).

¹³ Adventists (and Catholics) believed in legitimate spirit mediums as opposed to those that put on displays at séances. Adventists believed the spirits were far fewer in number and only communicated to a select few (Moore, 1974: 93- 94).

normal realm of experience, and the subsequent messages they received from these entities that gave direction to the religious movements they founded, was not unique during this time in American history.¹⁴ If spiritualism had not been so prevalent in the mid nineteenth century in the United States, then Ellen White and Joseph Smith might not have received the respect that their spiritualistic activities garnered for them, nor would they have managed to attract so large a following. The Spiritualist movement reinforced unpopular men and women – such as Ellen White and Joseph Smith – who supported unpopular causes or pursued socially anathematized courses of conduct (Moore, 1974: 81). White herself wrote many times of the depression she experienced as the result of her unpopularity, and Smith pursued the socially unacceptable course of polygamy.

Regarding spiritualism in America during the nineteenth century, transcendentalist author and Unitarian Minister Octavius Brooks Frothingham (1822 – 1895) wrote:

‘All of a sudden the rappings are heard, tables begin to tip, mahogany vibrates, and one whole side of the calm mountain of the common mind comes down in a fierce avalanche, and rushes across the continent depopulating churches, desolating homes of faith, scattering communions, burying shrines, and covering the fair gardens of religion with heaps of ruin’ (quoted in Moore, 1974: 79).

¹⁴ Ellen White wrote against the “rapping” phenomenon of the Fox sisters and presented it as a delusion of Satan. Since Adventists believe that the souls of the dead sleep in the ground and do not go to heaven or hell, it is impossible, given this view, for Ellen White to endorse any form of communion with the spirits of the dead (White, 1882: 262- 264). The official Adventist doctrine of soul sleep is listed as fundamental belief #26 and is available from the official SDA website at <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>.

While Frothingham himself felt that the spiritualist movement was a fraudulent movement that survived through tricking an unsuspecting and complacent public, he nonetheless acknowledged the effect it had on orthodox religious experience (Moore, 1974: 79). While the Fox Sisters and their “rappings” may have caused an increased excitement in the possibility of contact with the “spirits,” other, earlier claims of spiritualism had already made themselves felt in the burned-over district. One of the earliest people to claim spiritualist contact was the Shaker prophetess Ann Lee and her followers.

Ann Lee (1736 – 1784), the founder of the Shaker movement in America, claimed to be the Messiah and her followers continued to perpetuate the myth long after her death (Numbers, 1992: 15-16). While it is unclear if Ann Lee herself ever claimed to divine with the spirits,¹⁵ her later followers were no strangers to spiritualistic activity. The Shaker revival of the mid nineteenth century began with a phase in which spirits possessed children, particularly girls, in the Shaker communes. This spiritualistic trance activity began in August of 1837, and often those under the hypnotic spell spoke of receiving messages from Ann Lee (Humez, 1993: 210).

Mary Baker Eddy (1821 – 1910), founder of Christian Science, claimed to hear voices and receive “ghostly visitations in the night” from a very young age (Cather and Milmine, 1993: 19). Later, Eddy became a medium and held séances at her home. She claimed to hear rappings, see the spirits of the dead standing by her bed, and receive communication from the dead (Cather and Milmine, 1993:

¹⁵ The Adventist historian Arthur Spalding claimed that the visions of Ann Lee guided the Shaker community and were the basis of the Shaker’s successful recruitment activities long after her death (Spalding, 1961: 132).

30). Spiritualism influenced Mary Baker Eddy her entire life (Springer, 1931: 152).

Perhaps the best-known religious leader to claim communion with spirits was Mormon founder Joseph Smith.¹⁶ He claimed he received his first vision in 1820, but did not write it down until 1832 at which time he alleged communion with a being that hovered above the floor and identified itself as “Moroni” (Bushman, 1984: 56, 61).

While there were other less known figures who claimed various methods of communication with many different spirit beings throughout this period,¹⁷ it is impossible to ignore the influence of spiritualism on the identity of the early SDA organization. Not only was Ellen White’s alleged prophetic role less controversial given the prevalent spiritualistic attitude of the burned-over district, but also at least two of the doctrines and teachings of the SDA organization owe their creation, at least in part, to prevalent spiritualistic beliefs.

Spiritualists harbored a strong sense of the possibility of perfection in both this world and the next (Moore, 1974: 91).¹⁸ Seventh-day Adventism, more strongly in its formative stages, was no stranger to the belief in the attainment of human perfection in this world. White wrote that anyone who strove for perfection of character could attain it and that obedience to the [Old Testament]

¹⁶ Not only did Joseph Smith grow up in an area in which this phenomenon was prevalent, but also he grew up in a house where communion with spirits was accepted. His father, Joseph Smith Sr., had two “prophetic dreams” in 1811 as well as later visions. In the 1811 vision, Smith’s father claimed to have communed with an attendant spirit (Bushman, 1984, 39).

¹⁷ One such person was Jemima Wilkinson, founder of the community of Jerusalem in upstate N.Y. who claimed to have frequent dreams and visions (Numbers, 1992: 16).

¹⁸ Spiritualists were not the only group that taught some form of perfectionism. It was a strong theme running through the many denominations and preachers in Christendom, including the Methodist movement, from which Ellen White’s family hailed (Smith, 1980: 114 – 117).

law was essential for human salvation (Trustees of The Ellen G. White Publications, 1958: 212, 218, 220; White, 1911: 560-561). She also wrote that only those who overcome temptations to speak or *think* evil would enter heaven (The Trustees of The Ellen G. White Publications, 1955: 348).¹⁹

No concept of hell existed in Spiritualist thinking; nor does it appear in Seventh-day Adventism (Moore, 1974: 90). SDAs believe in the idea of soul sleep, the belief that a person does not immediately go to heaven or hell upon death.²⁰ SDAs believe that when Christ returns, he will raise the dead and either reward them with eternal life or punish them with eternal death. SDAs believe this eternal death is not an eternity spent in hell as many other Protestant denominations teach but rather a literal death (Rice, 1985: 333-335). SDAs do teach that God will destroy the wicked at the end of time with fire, but this destruction is final and not an eternal existence of torment in the fires of an eternally burning hell.²¹

Revivalism

While millennialism laid a foundation for religious excitement and expectation, and spiritualism allowed for communion with otherworldly entities and new interpretations of scripture; in revival meetings these new and mysterious beliefs found their voice. Between 1825 and 1850, revivals happened in

¹⁹ It is important to note the correlation in her writings between obedience to the law (the work of man) and the grace of God through Jesus (the work of Jesus). Therefore, in the mind of White, salvation was only possible through a combination of perfect obedience (perfection) and grace. This interpretation is not a strict form of perfectionism but rather a variation where God and man work together towards the perfection of human character.

²⁰ The official Adventist position on death is available on the organization's website, <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>.

²¹ The official Adventist position on eschatology is available on the organization's website, <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>.

continuous succession in the United States (Smith, 1980: 45). As mentioned earlier, it was the continual fires of revival that swept upstate New York and the surrounding areas that gave the area the name “burned over district” and fostered most of the 250 sects that began during that period (McLoughlin, 1974: 125).

Millennialism was the common feature of most nineteenth century revivals and revivalist preachers believed that God had chosen America as His special nation in which to inaugurate the millennium. Revival preachers believed that the millennium was imminent, that it would take place in their generation, that it would occur in the United States of America, and that America as a nation must live in obedience to [God’s] commandments in order for the millennium to occur. The great revivalist of the day, Charles Finney (1792 – 1875) wrote, “If the church will do her duty, the millennium may come in this country in three years” (quoted in McLoughlin, 1974: 145). Therefore, the appeal of revivalism in American society was that it taught that America was the nation chosen by God to lead the world into the Promised Land through the millennial hope and perfectionist principles imbedded in American culture (McLoughlin, 1974: 130-131). Adventism promoted this perfectionist tendency through their theology and identity.

Extreme positions on temperance were also a common part of most nineteenth century revivals. During the revivals of the mid nineteenth century, drunkenness as well as the use of all stimulants became a sin and not simply a departure from decency (Cross, 1950: 211-212). Revivalist preachers often advocated the cessation of all activities that might keep one from experiencing the

outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Although the temperance movement began long before the revivalist crusades of this period, temperance eventually became a central and continuing part of the Seventh-day Adventist health message (Cross, 1950: 211; Pierson, 1975: 92-109; Schwarz, 1979: 177-178, 536).²² In the midst of this spiritual milieu a farmer from New England, William Miller, began to preach his distinct message, and the movement that formed around him eventually gave birth to the Seventh-day Adventist organization. Miller's career began simply, but within a few short years, Millerite revivals were the largest in the area as millennial and spiritualistic beliefs came to a crescendo in the apocalyptic message he preached.

William Miller and the Millerite Movement

As I previously showed, William Miller was not the father of the millennial movement, nor was he the first preacher in history to speculate on the end of the world. What made William Miller different was that he set a specific date for the second coming of Christ to earth.²³ Most Protestant denominations had, and still have, a view of the end of the world and the second coming of Christ, and during the revivalist period of the nineteenth century many Protestant ministers spoke on this theme. When William Miller appeared on the scene in the mid nineteenth century, he “gained adherents by advocating a sensational variant of the views they [other Protestants] all preached. [His] bizarre crusade to

²² Robert H. Pierson was president of the Seventh-day Adventist organization from 1966 to 1979. Information on all SDA presidents is available on page 3 of the 143rd Annual Statistical Report of the SDA organization issued in 2005 and available from the SDA Church General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics at: <http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/ASR/asr2005.pdf>.

²³ Adventist historian LeRoy Froom suggested that between 1800 and 1844, more than sixty-five individuals predicted the end of the world (or the fulfilment of the 2300 year/day prophecy upon which Miller based his predictions) between 1843 and 1847 (in Knight, 1993: 16).

convince the nation that Christ would return in 1843 did not discredit the millennialism movement. He appeared at the point when revival fires were bringing millennial fever to its height, which no doubt contributed to his initial success” (Smith, 1980: 228).

Miller himself was not a minister, nor did he have any theological training. After a long spiritual crisis and loss of faith before and during the War of 1812, he converted to the Baptist faith in 1816 (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 2; Rowe, 2008: 38-40, 56-70; Schwarz, 1979: 31-32). After a period of intense personal Bible study, Miller concluded that the next great apocalyptic event would happen in 1843, an event he believed to be the return of Christ to earth, based on his study of Daniel 8: 14.²⁴ By early 1842, he began teaching that the sanctuary identified in Daniel 8: 14 referred to the earth. Consequently, Miller believed that the cleansing of the sanctuary meant the cleansing of the earth, which he identified with the return of Christ and the ascension of the saints. Miller based his prediction on the “2300 days” prophecy found in Daniel 8:14 and assumed that the phrase “evenings and mornings” stood for one full year (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 44; Rowe, 2008: 105-106). One Adventist critic suggested that Miller’s predictions were the result of personal feelings and faulty chronological figures that extended back over 2300 years, since Miller had no formal training and did not consult with other theologians. This critic suggested that William Miller

²⁴ Miller first predicted that the return of Christ would happen in 1843, but after Christ failed to return on the specified date in 1843, Miller’s associates convinced him that the correct date was the spring of 1844. After this date also proved false, October 22, 1844 became the final date that Miller predicted for the second coming of Christ (Froom, 1971: 65; Schwarz, 1979: 49). Daniel 8:14 says, “He said to me, ‘It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated’ (NIV).”

rejected Biblical commentaries and relied on his own unaided views, which resulted in many biblical scholars disputing his reasoning when he first began to preach (Canright, 1919: 35, 50). While biblical scholars may have disputed Miller's conclusions, many Protestant churches welcomed Miller and his message (From, 1971: 68). In the vein of revivalist preachers of the time, Miller drew large crowds and his message drew strong reactions, both positive and negative, wherever he taught (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 2-3; Schwarz, 1979: 32-33).

Durkheim's theory of collective effervescence offers an important understanding of how the initial Millerite enthusiasm of the early and mid nineteenth century led to the eventual formation of the Seventh-day Adventist organization. Durkheim said "the very act of congregating was an exceptionally powerful stimulant . . . and a sort of electricity was generated from their closeness that quickly launched them to extraordinary heights of exaltation" (Durkheim, 1912: 217). Joseph Zygmunt wrote that excited conversations, collective chanting and dancing, group feasting, improvised rituals, emotionally expressive and provocative prayer, ecstatic utterances, glossolalia and the like were all expression of collective effervescence that a millenarian group might experience as expressions of solidarity (Zygmunt, 1972: 252). Eyewitness accounts of Millerite tent meetings fit Zygmunt's description (Abanes, 1998: 221; Little, 2004: 186-188; Numbers, 1992: 6-8).²⁵ Many people left their original churches to join with

²⁵ Some SDA historians, such as George R. Knight dispute the "fanatical extremism" attributed to Millerite meetings. Knight argued that not all Millerite camp meetings evidenced fanaticism (Knight, 1993: 102 – 105). The collective effervescence these camp meetings generated is impossible to deny, however, since the Millerite movement grew rapidly as it attracted thousands of adherents from other religious organizations who were caught up in the excitement and enthusiasm surrounding Miller's predictions. Current SDA's tend to distance themselves from all "extreme" displays (such as raising of hands, clapping, glossolalia, ecstatic

the new movement forming under his prophetic, apocalyptic message. When the Millerite experience ended in 1844, certain of Miller's followers continued to congregate together. They no doubt needed the effervescence that their continued gatherings generated. As I show later, the SDA organization continued to meet together in large collective gatherings in order to experience the collective effervescence that Durkheim identified.

Miller felt his message was one that would unite Protestants in joyful expectation of the imminent coming of Christ, not divide them, and certainly not cause the formation of any new religious movement (Arthur, 1974: 154). As excitement grew and larger crowds gathered, other leading ministers began to join Miller. Two of these ministerial converts, Joshua V. Himes (1805 – 1895) and Charles Fitch (1805 – 1844) significantly changed the nature and identity of the Millerite movement (Rowe, 2008: 158-165).

Under the direction of Joshua V Himes, Millerism became aggressive. Whereas Miller had been content to preach his message only when invited to do so, Himes began to actively promote Miller among the local churches. Himes rented large tents and the Millerites began to hold their own meetings in the center of towns when local churches did not invite Miller to speak (Little, 2004: 182). Soon Miller and his followers became an independent force capable of disrupting churches, and some of Miller's followers who were still engaged with their original churches harassed their ministers. In turn, these ministers perceived those followers to be contentious and self-righteous, and often removed the Millerites

utterances) in their meetings. They also try to downplay or deny the instances of charisma in their history.

from their congregations (Arthur, 1974: 155, 171; Rowe, 2008: 177). In 1840, Himes began a small magazine named *Signs of the Times* in which he published many of Miller's views. In doing so, Himes brought Miller to the attention of a much larger audience (Abanes, 1998: 219; Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 2; Schwarz, 1979: 37 – 38). As more people joined the Millerite movement and left their original churches, and as Himes began to present Miller's views to a wider audience through his magazine emphasizing the differences between Miller's teachings and those of most Protestant organizations, the Millerite movement began to form an identity that diverged from mainstream Protestantism.

In 1838, Charles Fitch, who was a young minister from Boston, joined the movement growing around Miller (Schwarz, 1979: 34). After a careful study of Miller's teaching, Fitch began to teach that the entire Protestant Christian world was Babylon, and therefore Antichrist, and that men and women who wished to be saved had to become Adventist and "come out of Babylon" (Arthur, 1974: 166-169; Schwarz, 1979: 47).²⁶ Himes's teaching on the identification of Babylon with the Protestant churches caused division within the Millerite movement. William Miller himself never officially endorsed any position regarding the identity of Babylon, although he did encourage those who believed his teachings to leave their denominations if those denominations began to persecute them or cast them out (Arthur, 1974: 164, 170; Rowe, 2008: 178 – 180). Once again the identity of the Millerites began to diverge from the mainstream

²⁶ At this point, many people called the followers of William Miller "Adventists" because of their belief in the imminent advent of Christ. Seventh-day Adventists (commonly known as Adventists) did not adopt their official name until 1860 (Schwarz, 1979: 94 – 95).

Protestant world as the Millerite preachers advocated separation, and the mood of the Protestant churches began to cool towards the “Adventists” in their midst.²⁷

In August of 1840, Himes announced in *Signs of the Times* the first “general conference” of all who believed in the advent message. According to Himes, the intention was not to inaugurate a new denomination, since Miller had not intended to form a new denomination, although at the meeting the delegates did elect officials and pass resolutions on points of doctrine (Abanes, 1998: 219; Arthur, 1974: 156 – 158). Whatever Himes’ intentions, the advent message continued to gain momentum and win converts and as 1843 approached between 50,000 and 100,000 ministers and congregants left their churches and joined the advent movement (Froom, 1971: 70). Among those who left their churches to join William Miller were a young woman named Ellen Harmon and a young man named James White. In the aftermath of the failed apocalypse of October 22, 1844, James White and Ellen Harmon would be instrumental in creating a new identity for the few die-hard Millerites who refused to accept that William Miller had been wrong.²⁸

Cognitive Dissonance and the Beginning of the SDA Organization

Miller predicted the end of the world in 1843 and then again in 1844, but neither date proved to be correct. October 22, 1844, the last date Miller gave for the end of the world, proved to be the final failure and Miller set no new dates.

Prophetic disconfirmation and the frustration of millenarian expectations can have

²⁷ Other, lesser known, Millerite preachers who advocated separation from Protestantism included F. G. Brown, Silas Hawley, and Sylvester Bliss (Arthur, 1979: 164-165).

²⁸ The Methodist congregation, which Ellen Harmon attended with her parents and siblings, formally dismissed the Harmon family for their acceptance of Miller’s message (Numbers, 1992: 11).

an acutely disorganizing effect on individual believers and the movement in general. Disconfirmation can invalidate the charisma of the leader, lead to the attrition of members, and also give rise to new leaders whose competition with each other contributes to organizational fragmentation and schism (Zygmunt, 1972: 257-258). Similarly, the Millerite movement quickly lost focus and dissolved as Miller admitted his error and most of his followers returned to their original churches and confessed their mistakes (Canright, 1919: 52; Stark and Bainbridge, 1985: 141).²⁹

Some of Miller's followers who still held to the importance of the 1844 date did not return to their old churches but, instead, began to study the Bible in an attempt to explain this failure of Christ to return. They insulated themselves from the world around them and drew upon their internal resources to grope for new explanations (Butler, 1974: 178). Their actions were attempts to resolve the cognitive dissonance that the failure of Miller's prophecies created for them and to stand firm despite the loss of faith of their parent organization, the Millerite movement.

After 1844, those who still held to Miller's original teachings splintered into several different groups, a few of which set new and different dates for the second coming. Early SDA dissident Dudley Canright suggested that there were seven splinters groups that formed in the aftermath of 1844 (Canright, 1915: 37). Sociologists Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge do not give a specific number of sects that began out of the Millerite movement; however, they do point

²⁹ The Baptist Church excommunicated Miller yet, until his death in 1850, he continued to believe in the imminent return of Christ (Cross, 1950: 311-132).

out that the Russelite movement, which eventually became the Jehovah's Witness organization, began as a splinter group early in the history of the SDA organization. They also state that most of these splinter groups (except for the Jehovah's Witnesses) established strict prohibitions against setting new dates for the return of Christ (Stark and Bainbridge, 1985: 141). While it is not within the scope of this project to trace each of these groups through their various organizational or theological odysseys, the fact that so many groups began to form their own organizational identities suggests that the issue of identity was important to these disenfranchised followers of William Miller. While some of these groups continued to set new dates for the arrival of Christ, one group instead chose to look for alternative explanations for the failure of Christ to return. This small group eventually became known as Seventh-day Adventists and molded a unparalleled identity for themselves.

Stark and Bainbridge suggested that sects attempt to restore practices and doctrines that the parent group no longer advocates. Such was the case with the SDA founders' unwillingness to admit to Miller's mistakes even after Miller did (Stark and Bainbridge, 1981: 141 – 143). Drawing on Richard Niebuhr's book, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929), Stark and Bainbridge suggested the existence of a cyclical model in the history of Protestant groups. One part of this suggested cycle is the formation of a new group. New groups nearly always began in protest against the "loss of faith" of the body out of which they came (Niebuhr, 1929: 19; Stark and Bainbridge, 1985: 100). Although William Miller

had lost faith in the 1844 message, those who would eventually form the Seventh-day Adventist church had not.

Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter's book *When Prophecy Fails* (1956), suggest that the early Adventists could not admit that Miller had been in error because "they had placed all of their hope in the Adventist cause and had to protect themselves from the immense dissonance of so futile an act" (Festinger et al., 1956: 25-29). This need that early Adventists had to protect themselves from feelings of dissonance is a key concept in understanding the creation of SDA identity after 1844. Rather than admit they had made a mistake in advocating 1844 as a significant date in cosmological history, these early pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist organization believed they (and Miller) had not been in error. Instead, they attempted to reinterpret the 1844 event in an attempt to prove that their belief in the 1844 message was still valid, and that the rest of the Protestant world was in error for not accepting their reinterpretation of the event. (I discuss the specifics of this reinterpretation later in this chapter.) In order to understand why a group of individuals would cling to faulty reasoning and disconfirming events with such fervor, it is essential to view these individuals through the theoretical framework of cognitive dissonance theory as developed by Leon Festinger in 1957.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

In his book *When Prophecy Fails* (1956), Leon Festinger laid the groundwork for the theory of cognitive dissonance. Festinger and his fellow researchers based the book on an analysis of two alternative religious groups that

had predicted certain world-ending events. Both groups had built identities around these predictions, had experienced a failure of these predictions, and had enacted dissonance reducing strategies in the aftermath of these failed predictions. One of the groups that Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter studied was the Millerite movement of the mid nineteenth century.³⁰ In *When Prophecy Fails*, Festinger wrote:

When a person believes a certain tenet of their [sic] faith and orders their life in compliance with that belief, the dissonance that occurs when that certain tenet proves false is very painful and the person will take certain steps to reduce the dissonance. The person may discard the belief that produced the discomfort, however this would mean that they [sic] must also discard many other beliefs and/or actions that the central belief produced. Frequently the behavioral commitment to the belief system is so strong that almost any other course of action is preferable. It may even be less painful to tolerate the dissonance than to discard the belief and admit one had been wrong. A second option is for members to blind themselves to the fact that the certain tenet of their faith has failed. They may attempt to find alternate explanations for the belief. Ultimately, the more support a person or group find for their new explanation allows that person or group to recover from the initial shock of the failure. Because of

³⁰ The other group Festinger et al. studied was the Guardians. Alison Lurie's book *Imaginary Friends* is a fictional story but may have been based on the research Festinger and his researchers undertook with the Guardians before writing *When Prophecy Fails*. Joseph P. Szimhart's review of *Imaginary Friends* in which he asserts this theory regarding Lurie's book, is on the International Cultic Studies Association Website: http://www.icsahome.com/infoserv_bookreviews/bkrev_imaginaryfriends.html.

this, it is common to see an increase in proselytizing after a group finds a new explanation for a failed belief (Festinger et al., 1956: 26-28).

A few of Miller's followers (such as the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist organization) did not discard their beliefs after the disconfirmation they experienced when Christ did not return to earth in 1844. Instead, as Festinger had suggested, they attempted to find alternate explanations for why Christ did not return, and once they settled upon a new interpretation of the event they then began to actively proselytize in order to gain as many adherents as possible to their new belief system.³¹

In 1957, Leon Festinger published his groundbreaking work, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Festinger suggested that when two cognitions³² existed in a “non-fitting” relationship, the individual who held the two contradictory cognitions would experience a feeling of dissonance. Since this dissonance was psychologically uncomfortable, Festinger posited that it would motivate the individual to attempt to reduce the dissonance in order to achieve a state of psychological consonance (Festinger, 1957: 3). Therefore, in Festinger's theory, cognitive dissonance was a motivational factor that caused individuals to enact strategies for not only reducing the dissonance, but also for avoiding situations and information that might increase the dissonance. When a person became aware of new events and/or information that would create dissonance with

³¹ A study of the Church of the True Word by Hardyck and Braden in 1962, suggested that not every group experiencing disconfirming events will resort to proselytizing behaviour to reduce dissonance (Hardyck and Braden, 1962: 139). The example of the SDA church, however, does follow the Festinger model.

³² Festinger defined cognitions as “things that a person knows about himself, about his behaviour, and about his surroundings.” He went on to say that knowledge, beliefs, opinions, values, and attitudes function as cognitions for his definition (Festinger, 1957: 9-10).

existing knowledge, opinions, or cognitions concerning behavior, Festinger said that the natural human reaction was to attempt to reduce and avoid further dissonant feelings (Festinger, 1957: 4).

Building on this initial premise, Festinger said that cognitive dissonance could arise from a variety of causes, and that the magnitude of the dissonance for an individual was directly proportional to the importance of the dissonant elements (Festinger, 1957: 13-16). This meant that there was not just one specific or a limited number of situations in which a researcher might expect to see cognitive dissonance appear. Dissonance could happen in a variety of situations (some more important to an individual than others) and was not limited to laboratory experiments. Consequently, certain dissonant cognitions produced a stronger desire in an individual to reduce the dissonance than other dissonant cognitions.³³

Adding to the level of dissonance an individual experienced, Robert Wicklund and Jack W. Brehm expanded on ideas of free choice and individual feelings of responsibility and the relationship between dissonance arousal/reduction and the ability of an individual to freely choose the dissonance arousing belief or act. Echoing Festinger, Wicklund and Brehm said that cognitive dissonance was a motivational state brought about when a person had cognitive elements that contradicted one another. They moved beyond Festinger, however,

³³For example, a person who did not like animals, yet found her/himself visiting the home of a friend who owned a pet, might decide that the dissonant feelings (dislike of animals versus wanting to spend time with a friend) were not strong enough to make that person decide to abandon the visit. The example that Festinger used (as did others), of a person experiencing a high level of dissonance, was that of a habitual smoker being confronted by information showing the harmful effects of smoking. Festinger thought that the level of dissonance created in that situation was great enough to force the smoker to enact strategies to reduce the dissonance.

when they wrote that dissonance reduction might be observed only to the degree that the individual saw himself or herself as responsible for bringing cognitions into an inconsistent relationship. To clarify, Wicklund and Brehm said that dissonance arousal was greater if the individual felt personal responsibility for the consequences of their action through the dimensions of choice and “foreseeability” (Wicklund and Brehm, 1976: 10, 51-52, 71). If the individual had an alternative choice that would have negated the dissonance and did not make that choice but rather freely chose to embrace the dissonance-causing belief (knowing that the consequences of that choice would produce dissonance), then that individual would feel a greater level of dissonance than a person who made the dissonance-causing choice without knowledge of an alternative or the ability to know if the choice would cause feelings of dissonance in the future.

In the case of the SDA organization, the initial members as well as new converts knew they were joining a group that held dissenting views from the Protestant world. They also knew that membership in the group meant mainstream groups would continue to ostracize them since they were joining a tradition that most Protestants considered antisocial in both belief and practice (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 6). As such, adherents would have experienced a high level of dissonance when they joined the SDA organization since they knew in advance of joining the organization that their choice to join would lead to feelings of dissonance that they could have avoided by choosing not to join.

Social psychologist Joel Cooper agreed with Wicklund and Brehm’s advances but added that when a person was coerced into engaging in dissonance-

creating acts or beliefs, the dissonance level for that individual would be very low. Therefore, for an individual to experience a high level of dissonance, that person must freely choose to engage in the dissonance-creating act or belief. Cooper also cited several studies in the 1960s (Carlsmith, Collins, and Helmreich, 1966; Davis and Jones, 1960) that found individuals experienced a greater amount of dissonance when they felt committed to their attitude-inconsistent statements (or beliefs), and were publically identified with the statements (or beliefs), meaning it would be harder to retract them at a later date (Cooper, 2007: 63).

Earlier, Festinger had suggested that when an individual knew that a certain decision would create dissonant feelings with several other cognitions, this knowledge caused the individual to experience conflict when making a choice. Festinger said the greater the conflict during this pre-choice phase, the greater the dissonance during the post-choice phase. In a situation where the choice produced a high level of dissonance, the individual would be more likely to justify the decision and to increase the attractiveness of the decision while decreasing the attractiveness of the rejected alternatives (Festinger, 1964: 5-6).³⁴

In the case of the Millerites (including those who eventually formed the Seventh-day Adventist organization) after the disappointment of 1844, cognitive dissonance would have been extremely high, since the dissonance they felt involved the end of the world, the transport of the saints to heaven, and the eternal

³⁴ Festinger also acknowledged that the act of increasing the attractiveness of a choice while concurrently devaluating the attractiveness of the alternatives can begin before an individual makes a choice. It is important to note that dissonance reducing strategies are not always effective and that individuals do experience regret after making a choice (Festinger, 1964: 6 – 7). These individuals may become dissidents, they may introduce other dissonant reducing strategies, or they may simply exit the movement and reject their earlier decision.

destinies of every individual on earth. Adherents had freely chosen to believe and promote this belief in a very public manner, and while many Millerites admitted their error as a way to reduce the dissonance, Seventh-day Adventists did not. Their decision to “enshrine the [1844] date and Miller’s movement as an important date in salvation history” became a matter of salvation for Adventists and a cornerstone of later Adventist theological innovation (Bull and Lockhart, 1986: 6). Therefore, according to Festinger’s theory, SDAs could not admit their error in believing that 1844 was a significant day in eschatological history because they had publically advocated the importance of that date and their belief that Christ would return to earth on it. Rather than reject this belief, thereby adding to the dissonance they already felt due to the failure of Christ to return, they had to justify their decision by continuing to advocate the importance of 1844.

Festinger said that an event could occur that was so compelling in nature that it produced almost identical reactions and behavior in everyone for whom that event had relevance. The threat of natural disaster or the belief in the beginning of the long awaited millennium (among religious groups) could cause this type of dissonance when the predicted disaster did not happen even though the group may have taken steps in preparation for it. Efforts to reduce this dissonance could take the form of continued assurances to each other that the disaster would still come and that it would still be as disastrous as anticipated, or

the attempt to persuade each other that the discomforts and inconveniences suffered were actually pleasurable experiences (Festinger, 1957: 193 – 194).³⁵

Festinger's basic theory stated that there is a possibility of three relationships between any two cognitions: irrelevant relations, dissonant relations, and consonant relations (Festinger, 1957: 11).³⁶ For the purpose of this thesis I focus on consonant and dissonant relations (the main focus of Festinger's theory). According to Festinger's theory, when two pieces of knowledge or information (cognition) do not fit together, the result is dissonant relationships, which Festinger described as psychologically uncomfortable (Festinger, 1957: 3, 11). Since the human psyche desires homeostasis, or consonance, Festinger suggested that when dissonance occurs, individuals (and groups) feel pressure to reduce this dissonance and as a result implement dissonance reducing strategies. Festinger suggested two dissonance reducing strategies. The first was changing one's cognitions and the second was exposure to new information (Festinger, 1957: 31).³⁷ Agreeing with Festinger, Joel Cooper wrote:

Most typically, after dissonance is aroused, individuals reduce dissonance by justifying their behavior. They change attitudes, justify their choices,

³⁵ SDAs continue to teach that Christ will soon return to earth and usher in the millennium although they no longer advocate a specific date for this event.

³⁶ Festinger defined irrelevant relationship as two cognitions that have nothing to do with each other and therefore cannot produce a consonant or a dissonant relationship. Festinger defined a consonant relationship between two cognitions as a relationship where one cognition naturally follows from the other. He defined a dissonant relationship between two cognitions as a relationship where one cognition does not follow from the other (Festinger, 1957: 11-13).

³⁷ Changing cognitions may mean changing behaviours that result in dissonance or changing the environment where the dissonance causing cognition occurs. Exposure to new information means adding new information (new cognitions) and new sources of information that reduces the importance of the existing dissonance (Festinger, 1957: 18-24).

and rationalize their expenditure of effort to render the consequences of their behavior non-aversive (2007: 109-110).

While there are other ways of reducing dissonance, I focus on the justification of choices and rationalizations since they explain SDA identity formation and also because they represent the majority reaction in the groups Festinger and others studied.

Festinger was aware of how difficult his suggested adaptation strategies might be for an individual. First, Festinger said that it would be difficult to reduce dissonance by changing cognitions or adding new ones since cognitions are resistant to change. One source of resistance is the responsiveness of the cognition to reality (Festinger, 1957: 24-25). While Festinger knew that it was possible to reduce dissonance by adding new cognitive elements that either reduced the importance of the dissonance or reconciled it, he knew it would be difficult to change those cognitions in the face of reality, depending on the individual's or group's grasp of reality (Festinger, 1957: 21-23). For Seventh-day Adventists, the reality was that they had predicted the second coming of Christ on October 22, 1844 and their predictions had been false. Christ had not come back. Therefore, SDAs faced a difficult task as they began to search for methods to reduce the dissonance they felt in the weeks and months following October 22, 1844.

While the late sociologist, Joseph Zygmunt, argued that researchers should see prophetic disconfirmation as a separate phenomenon from prophetic non-confirmation (such as a delay in the fulfillment of the specific prophecy, leading

to a situation that would allow for a lessening of cognitive dissonance [Zygmunt, 1972: 247, 259]), in the SDA case, prophetic disconfirmation was the reality of their situation.³⁸ Despite overwhelming evidence of the disconfirmation of Miller's prediction, early SDAs refused to accept that the prediction had been completely incorrect. By attempting to reinterpret Miller's prediction while asserting the continued importance of 1844 in eschatological time, Adventist cognitions regarding William Miller's prophetic claims and the subsequent failure of those claims were resistant to the reality of the ensuing situation.

The Adventist situation offers a glimpse into the difference between prophetic non-confirmation and prophetic disconfirmation. The reality that Christ had not come back in 1844, despite Miller's specific prediction of that date, signaled a prophetic disconfirmation that was not easy to reinterpret or overlook. Nonetheless, the subsequent Adventist reinterpretation of the event fits better within a framework of prophetic non-confirmation. In the framework of non-confirmation, prophetic predictions are ambiguous, subject to various interpretations, and usually are not tied to specific dates or events. The reinterpretation of an event or the failure of a prophetic prediction to come true is much easier for a group when their prophecy is ambiguous, since it allows the group to reinterpret the failure in different ways--such as the misinterpretation of

³⁸ Prophetic disconfirmation relates to a specific prophecy regarding a specific event occurring on a specific date. Disconfirmation means that the predicted event has failed to occur on the specified date and the prophecy is therefore false. Prophetic non-confirmation means that the predicted event has failed, however believers should not interpret the failure of the event as a failure of the prophecy, but should look to reinterpret either the event or the specified date since the prophecy was open to various interpretations and did not depend on a specified fulfillment or a specified date.

supernaturally supplied evidence, the misreading of signs and the miscalculation of the supernatural schedule (Zygmunt, 1972: 260).

In the case of Miller and the Adventists, the prophecy was specific and the disconfirmation was impossible to avoid. Over time the Adventist leaders claimed that they had misinterpreted the signs as well as supernaturally supplied evidence and that Christ would still come back to earth at a later date. This allowed them to reinterpret the 1844 failure in such a way that they were able to continue teaching the importance of that date in their theology.³⁹ The fact that Adventists continued to advocate the chronological timeframe Miller used in his prediction, yet reinterpret the event, seems to be more in line with dissonance reducing strategies emanating from a situation of prophetic non-confirmation than with one of prophetic disconfirmation.

The decision Seventh-day Adventists made to continue following Miller's chronological predictions despite their falsification, led to what Festinger called the "active seeking out of new information." Festinger wrote that following a decision (choosing one alternative or cognition over another) there would be an active seeking out of information that produced cognitions consonant with the action taken (Festinger, 1957: 83). Festinger also said that this seeking of new information came with its own particular set of resistances. He wrote that another source of resistance to change lay in the fact that a cognitive element is in a relationship with any number of other cognitive elements. To the extent that the element was consonant with a large number of other elements and to the extent

³⁹ I discuss this reinterpretation in the section entitled "Adventist Formation as Dissonance Reducing Strategy."

that changing it would replace these consonances with dissonances, the new cognitive element would be resistant to change (Festinger, 1957: 27). Simply put, if an individual changed one cognitive element in order to reduce dissonance, then what other elements would that change affect that then also would need changing? For SDAs, the answer to that question provided them with a distinct set of doctrines that negated traditional interpretations of scripture and replaced them with new interpretations that supported the new cognition regarding 1844.

Next, Festinger said that an individual or group would actively seek out new information that produced consonance with the action taken, in this case, a new belief in the events surrounding 1844. When presented with new information that was consonant, the person would accept it. When presented with information that added to the dissonance, the person would avoid it, and if the person were to be involuntarily exposed to information that increased dissonance, that person would set up quick defensive processes that prevented the new information from becoming established (Festinger, 1957: 83, 136 – 137). In the Adventists' case, as they reinterpreted the events surrounding 1844, they also needed to accept a new understanding of salvation history, including the “work” of Jesus after his crucifixion and ascension, as well as the individual's role in that history.⁴⁰

Festinger suggested several methods a person might use to negate involuntary exposure to dissonance producing or dissonance confirming information. First, there may be an initial understanding of the information followed by a circuitous line of reasoning that ended in misunderstanding.

⁴⁰ I will explain these concepts later in this chapter when I discuss the formation of Adventist theology.

Second, there might be an attempt to make the application of the information invalid (the individual might admit that the general argument was valid but that its application to specific circumstances was not valid). A third method was to reject the entire line of reasoning, including the general argument since the information would not fit with the already established cognitions of the individual or group (Festinger, 1957: 134-136, 176). The history and formation of the Seventh-day Adventist organization immediately after the failure of William Miller's predictions show a group of people actively employing various dissonance-reducing strategies and negating information that challenged its identity.

Before looking at specific examples from SDA history that support Festinger's theory, it is important to understand some of the challenges that faced dissonance theory in the years following its initial introduction. Because Festinger stated his original thesis in such general, highly abstract terms, and because his theory is applicable to so many variant situations and groups, cognitive dissonance theory has generated numerous studies and controversies (Harmon-Jones and Mills, 1999: 5). Consequently, several researchers have suggested revision to the original theory. These revisions include the "free-choice" theory, "belief-disconfirmation" theory, "effort-justification" theory, and "induced-compliance" theory (Harmon-Jones and Mills, 1999: 5-10). In 1968, social psychologist Elliot Aronson suggested "self-consistency" theory as one alternative to cognitive dissonance theory. This theory proposed that dissonance arose when a decision created inconsistency between the self concept (belief that the individual is a moral or a good person) and a behavior (telling a lie or stealing

[Aronson, 2007: 120 – 122]). Aronson’s theory challenged the Festinger model that suggested dissonance arose simply from two cognitions and that action based on one of those cognitions was not necessary in order to cause dissonance.

In 1984, Joel Cooper and Russell Fazio suggested another revision to Festinger’s original thesis. This revision, known as “the new look,” proposed that dissonance arose when an individual felt personally responsible for producing foreseeable aversive consequences through his or her actions and/or beliefs (Cooper, 2007: 62-89). While some researchers attempted to dispose of or revise dissonance theory, many other researchers affirmed the validity of the original theory and suggested that it could explain all of the evidence generated by the alternative theories (Cooper, 2007: 182; Harmon-Jones and Mills, 1999: 13-15).⁴¹

Little consensus exists among scholars regarding Festinger’s original theory. Even with the proliferation of alternate theories regarding motivation and dissonance, Elliot Aronson (who was one of the original researchers who worked with Festinger and suggested variations to the theory) said that cognitive dissonance is making a comeback – under a variety of smaller sub-theories with different names. These smaller theories include self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988), self-evaluation maintenance theory (Tesser, 1988), self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1989), self-verification theory (Swann, 1984), and others (Aronson, 2007: 125, 131). Based on his earlier work (1960), Aronson went on to say that dissonance theory makes its strongest and clearest predictions when the self-concept of the individual was engaged. Dissonance was strongest when what

⁴¹ Joel Cooper’s *Cognitive Dissonance: Fifty Years of a Classic Theory* (2007) gives a good overview of several theories that have challenged and enlarged the field of cognitive dissonance study.

were involved were not just two dissonant cognitions but, rather, cognition about the self and a piece of behavior that violated that self-concept (Aronson, 2007: 121).

While the inclusion of behavior (action) may seem to challenge Festinger's original theory regarding two separate cognitions, it is perhaps better to view it as a continuation of the theory rather than a criticism of it since the "piece of behavior" that violates the self-concept to which Aronson referred is most assuredly based on a cognition that is in violation of a cognition about the self. In this way, the two cognitions are still present, but Aronson included action regarding one of the cognitions into the definition. In fact, Aronson anticipated the synthesis of Festinger's theory with future theories and concluded that the process of synthesizing similar theories regarding cognitive dissonance would reveal that dissonance reduction (a fundamental piece of Festinger's original theory) was a fundamental human process (Aronson, 2007: 133).⁴²

Adventist Formation as Dissonance Reducing Strategy

Like Miller, those who comprised the group of early SDA founders were theologically untrained. They had joined Miller's group and had accepted his faulty predictions and untrained theological reasoning as the truth. Now, without any training of their own, they had to attempt to figure out where Miller went wrong and how to forge an explanation of the 1844 disappointment that would reduce the dissonance such a disconfirming event caused.

⁴² While I have tried to reconcile self-perception theory with dissonance theory, others are more critical of self-perception theory. Wicklund and Brehm said that self-perception theory, which tried to establish an alternative to dissonance theory, was unfounded and in several instances obviously wrong (Wicklund and Brehm, 1976: 320).

While “theological training might be more of a liability than an asset to [revivalist preachers], since revivalism tended quite definitely to substitute emotion for reason and enthusiasm for knowledge” (Cross, 1950: 202), in the aftermath of so colossal a failure, the Adventists needed to avoid a repeat of such failures through a more careful theological exegesis. Reason and knowledge needed to form the basis of their new identity and beliefs. In order to win acceptance for the new explanation (whatever that might be) not only among their own followers but also the outside world, the reinterpretation of the 1844 event and the subsequent belief system based on the new interpretation of that event would need to be meaningful and credible.

According to sociologist Joseph F. Zygmunt, the credibility of a claim is not merely a function of its empirically demonstrable truth but also a function of its symbolic compatibility with previously developed convictions. When new convictions are anchored in and tied to aspects of an ideology that is shared by the group (even if the new conviction seriously alters that ideology), the group is more willing to accept it and allow it to influence its understanding of the prophetic failure. This strategy allows the group not only to deny the reality of the prophetic disconfirmation, but also to interpret reality in a novel way from an ideologically structured and socially insulated perspective (Zygmunt, 1972: 263-264).

The SDA organization also had to account for the fact that Miller and most of his followers had admitted their errors. If the founder of the movement had admitted he was wrong, then how could SDAs expect the rest of the world to take

them seriously when they continued to try and prove Miller had been partially correct? Even more difficult was the fact that Seventh-day Adventism was one out of many other groups that also had formed after 1844, each claiming to be the true descendents of Miller.⁴³ With so many small schisms in operation, how could Seventh-day Adventists hope to form their own distinct identity *and* have the world take them seriously? The answer came in the form of a new theology that gave rise to SDA identity while concurrently reducing the dissonance its adherents felt.

As the dissonance from the 1844 disconfirmation grew, the early Adventists implemented dissonance reducing strategies in the form of a new theology and a prophet. As a messenger from God, the prophet supplied them with a new source of information in the form of direct revelations from God, and gave them a sense of legitimization. The new theology emphasized the Seventh-day Adventist organization as the only true church, and the appearance of the prophet, Ellen (Harmon) White, confirmed this identity. In order to understand the identity of the SDA organization against which later dissidents revolted, I give an overview of the alleged prophetic role of White and the distinctive doctrines of the SDA organization.

Reliance on prophecy has played a vital role not only throughout the history of deviant religious movements but also in the theological development of the Adventist organization. According to Robert E. Lerner, as far back as the

⁴³ J. Gordon Melton documents eighty-four schisms that descend directly from the Millerite movement. The largest of these groups are the Seventh-day Adventist and the Jehovah's Witness groups (Melton, 1989: 22, 23, 129-172). Melton includes groups such as the Branch Davidians (a group that emerged in the 1950s) in his lists since the Davidians were a schism from Seventh-day Adventism.

fifteenth century CE, prophecy was a popular form of dissent against societal and church norms, often prompted by or set against the background of apparent calamities.⁴⁴ Lerner wrote, “[Such] events prompted reflective minds to ponder over the state of the world and to become convinced that even more dramatic events were soon to come” (1976: 7-8, 14).

Lerner suggested four methods that self proclaimed prophets used in an attempt to prove their legitimacy to their potential audiences. The first two relate directly to White’s claims to prophetic legitimacy. First, a prophet could claim to have visions much like those of Biblical distinction and second, a prophet could clarify or interpret prophetic books such as Daniel and Revelation, or find prophetic meaning hidden beneath the surface of other texts and/or books (Lerner, 1976: 10-12).⁴⁵

Not only was Ellen White an integral part of Adventist identity, but her claim that she was a divine conduit to heaven gave SDAs a sense of legitimacy. SDAs reasoned that if God had blessed their fledgling organization with a prophet, then everything they discovered and every doctrine they held had to be true since it bore the divine stamp of approval in the form of endorsements from the prophet herself.⁴⁶ Hence, where William Miller had failed to correctly

⁴⁴ Prophetic dissent did not begin in the fifteenth century CE. Although Lerner does not discuss earlier prophetic dissent, it is important to note that the biblical prophets depicted in the Old Testament—far earlier than the fifteenth century, were also dissenters.

⁴⁵ Lerner suggested two other methods. The first was the use of astrology, condemned by the Catholic Church but encouraged by scientific discovery. The second was contact with Arabic religion, which gave would-be prophets a new source of predictive phenomena. Would-be prophets could then publish their own ideas or a re-worked version of older prophecies, under pseudonyms, hoping to gain a following by appealing to a more reputable source (such as the mystic East, or an earlier known prophet).

⁴⁶ The Seventh-day Adventist organization considers Ellen White’s writings to be the revealed word of God, just as they consider the Bible to be the revealed word of God. While many

understand and interpret scripture based on his own flawed human reasoning, the SDA organization allegedly would succeed with the guidance of its prophet.

Ellen White: Adventist Prophet

Ellen G. White was born Ellen Gould Harmon on November 26, 1827, in Gorham, Maine. In 1840, Ellen Harmon experienced conversion while attending a Methodist Camp meeting with her parents, and later that year she received the first of many alleged visions from God (Spalding, 1961: 68). Most of Miller's converts were from the Methodist and Baptist churches, and soon Ellen Harmon and her family joined Miller's movement (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 33). In the months following the great disappointment of 1844, Ellen Harmon allegedly received several visions that helped to reduce the cognitive dissonance the group experienced. Her alleged visions helped to clarify the doctrinal and theological positions of this newly emerging sect, while also securing her place as its spiritual leader and prophet (Canright, 1919: 57).⁴⁷ Although the Millerites did not believe in private revelation, visions, or dreams (no doubt in response to the fanaticism and extremism of spiritualism), the newly forming SDA organization accepted them as authoritative (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 23).

SDAs would argue that White should not be compared to Biblical authority, former SDA General Conference President, Robert H Pierson, wrote that the SDA organization had the gift of revelation in the form of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. He went on to say that this revelation must be a determining factor in SDA's acceptance of truth. He concluded by saying that the Bible and the writings of Ellen White are not on trial when it comes to accepting controversial doctrines (Pierson, 1975: 58). His statements seems to suggest that the governing body of the SDA organization accepts controversial doctrines based on the alleged revelations and subsequent approval of the controversial doctrine by White. Therefore, White and the Bible seem to provide equal sources of authority in SDA theological development.

⁴⁷ Dudley Canright, who was one of the earliest dissenters within the SDA organization, claimed that initially most Adventists disregarded Ellen White's visions as fanatical (Canright, 1919: 57). I will discuss the specifics of this and other claims by Canright when I discuss Canright's dissenting opinions in chapter two.

In 1846, Ellen Harmon married James White and they had several children of the course of the next few years. White remained the only prophet of the SDA organization until her death in 1915 and her council was, and is still, considered the *only officially inspired prophetic voice outside of the canon of Scripture* (Lawson, 1992: 341). White instructed Adventists not to consider her writings to be “new light” or additions to the Bible. She did not want Adventists to call her “prophet” because she felt her work included much more than the work of a prophet. She referred to herself as “the Lord’s messenger” (Knight, 1987: 238; Schwarz, 1979: 417; White, 1882: 31, 32).

According to SDA historian Arthur W. Spalding, the early SDA organization did not want the world to see it as part of any type of extremism; therefore, it relied heavily on canonical texts as it considered how to understand the visions of White (Spalding, 1961: 58, 59). As organizational leaders read the New Testament book of Revelation, they discovered that God’s remnant church would be distinguished by two things: first, by keeping the commandments of God; and second by having the testimony of Jesus (also called “the spirit of prophecy”).⁴⁸ SDAs began to identify White as the “spirit of prophecy” identified in Revelation 19 (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 19).⁴⁹ In many cases, White’s alleged visions were essential to establishing unity during critical junctures in the

⁴⁸ The official website of the Seventh-day Adventist organization lists Revelation 12: 17; 14: 12; 19: 10 among others, as Biblical proof texts that they allege indicate that the work of Ellen White is the gift (or spirit) of prophecy. <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>.

⁴⁹ White claimed that one of her first alleged visions related specifically to the SDA organization and identified it as the remnant church of God. In the alleged vision, White claimed that God showed her the SDA adherents walking along a path that led them from earth to heaven (Spalding, 1961: 72). The light (the truth) of the October 22, 1844 message illuminated the path and those who did not accept this truth stumbled from the path and fell into the darkness below (Numbers, 1992: 14). Therefore, according to White’s vision, God would only save those who accepted the SDA interpretation of 1844.

formation of SDA doctrine when various factions differed on biblical interpretations (Numbers, 1996: 220).

In the formative period of SDA theology, the founders of the organization sought to distinguish themselves from their parent body based on what they felt to be a more correct interpretation of biblical themes. This process followed the standard pattern in which a zealous sectarian group tries to return to the purity of primitive Christianity, in contradistinction to a parent organization that has become complacent and compromised. The SDA organization, however, did not have a parent church. The group it deviated from was not a church, but a movement of its own (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 86). This difference meant that while the Adventists needed to maintain a connection to William Miller in order to justify their own existence, they also wanted to establish a separate, and purer, identity for themselves based on a better understanding of biblical themes.

As noted earlier, Festinger had said that when a single cognition changed, that change would affect all cognitions in relationship to it. In the case of the Adventists, Festinger's theory proved true. As SDAs reinterpreted and revised their understanding of 1844, they found that they needed to change their interpretation of other biblical themes in order to justify their "new" explanation of the events surrounding October 22, 1844.

The principle cause of SDA dissonance was the failure of Christ to return when Miller had predicted. If SDA leaders could convincingly revise their interpretation of this event, the movement would need other cognitive elements to be developed and put in place to ensure the validity of the new interpretation of

the 1844 failure. If the movement were to have any credibility, then it would need to explain that failure in a convincing way. Through a long process of biblical exegesis and an alleged vision⁵⁰ given to Hiram Edson (who was a new SDA convert) on October 23, 1844, the early forerunners of the SDA organization came to believe they had misinterpreted the divine event that had occurred on October 22, 1844. Therefore, SDAs alleged that October 22, 1844 was still a significant date in eschatological history and that they (and Miller) had been correct to predict a significant event on that date. SDAs also alleged, however, that William Miller had simply misinterpreted what was to happen on that date.

Edson claimed that God gave him a vision in which he saw an actual sanctuary building in heaven and Jesus going in to the Most Holy Place⁵¹ of that sanctuary on October 22, 1844, instead of coming out to cleanse the earth as Miller had predicted. White later confirmed this theory through a vision she alleged God gave her in which He told her that Hiram Edson's interpretation was correct (White: 1969: 37). After a period of time during which SDA leaders studied the Bible to find confirmation for this theory, and after Ellen White's approval of it, the SDA organization began to accept the sanctuary interpretation. The idea that Christ entered into a heavenly sanctuary instead of coming to the earth would become one of the foundations of the burgeoning SDA identity and a method of managing cognitive dissonance since it allowed SDA adherents to

⁵⁰ In SDA history, this is one of the only alleged visions received by someone other than Ellen G. White.

⁵¹ The sanctuary building contained two rooms; the outer room known as the Holy Place, and the inner sacred room known as the Most Holy Place. Seventh-day Adventists claimed that the sanctuary or tabernacle that the Hebrews carried with them after they left Egypt was a model of the sanctuary in heaven; therefore, SDA's assumed that they could understand the heavenly sanctuary by studying the Hebrew sanctuary described in Exodus 25-30 (Froom, 1971: 78-80; 541-560).

reinterpret their belief that Christ was supposed to have come back to earth in 1844 (Froom, 1971: 79-80; Schwartz, 1979: 62).

In 1846, Adventist lay leader, O. R. L. Crosier, studied the sanctuary subject in more detail and presented his views to the SDA leadership. Building on Edson's alleged vision, Crosier said that the sanctuary that Christ was to cleanse on October 22, 1844 was not the earth, as Miller taught, but the heavenly sanctuary – the true sanctuary upon which the Jewish sanctuary of the Old Testament had been modeled. Crosier claimed that Daniel was referring to this heavenly sanctuary in Daniel 8:14 and not the earth as Miller had claimed. Because William Miller had not accurately identified the temple in Daniel 8:14, he could not have understood that Christ entered in to the “Most Holy Place” of the heavenly temple in 1844 rather than coming out of the temple to cleanse the earth as Miller had taught. This new interpretation meant that from his death in approximately 33 A.D. Jesus, as the heavenly High Priest, had ministered in the outer courtyard of the heavenly temple, and then went into the Most Holy Place of the heavenly temple on October 22, 1844 to begin the actual work of atonement, eighteen hundred years after he died on the cross (White, 1888: 421-422). This view was in direct opposition to the orthodox view held by all Protestant churches that Christ had completed the work of atonement on the cross (Linden, 1982: 29).

Soon after Crosier presented this view to the SDA leadership, Ellen White claimed to have had a vision in which she said God confirmed Crosier's view.⁵² White said that once Christ entered into the Most Holy Place on October 22,

⁵² Crosier later abandoned both the sanctuary doctrine and the Sabbath doctrine and became a Christian Advent evangelist (Froom, 1971: 79).

1844, he would no longer hear sinner's prayers of confession since he was now engaged in the atonement phase of his ministry for saints and had shut the door of salvation to all who had rejected Miller's message and the message of the Adventist organization (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 6; Butler, 1974: 178-179; Canright, 1919: 100-102, 107; Schwarz, 1979: 67-79). Ellen White also said that Christ would still hear the prayers of all "who by faith followed him into the Most Holy Place." According to Ellen White, all other Christians were praying to an empty room in the heavenly sanctuary where Christ no longer was and therefore He could not hear their prayers (White, 1882: 261).⁵³

Crosier's view of the heavenly sanctuary explained why Jesus had not returned to earth in 1844, but it did not explain the continuing delay. While Adventist leaders espoused several theories to explain the continued delay,⁵⁴ another early Adventist pioneer, J. N. Loughborough, developed the idea of the "investigative judgment" in the mid 1850s (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 61). The idea of an investigative judgment in heaven, with its attending implications, became another basis for Adventist theological identity. Adventists believed that the "investigative judgment" referred to the heavenly judgment of every person who had ever lived on the earth and that this judgment had begun in heaven on October 22, 1844. In the investigative judgment, a record of every person's life passed before God for judgment. Adventists believed that during the judgment, Satan argued that each person's sins meant that the individual under investigation

⁵³ Without doubt this meant that Christ would only hear the prayers of SDAs since they were the only ones who knew that Christ had begun his work in the Most Holy Place in 1844.

⁵⁴ Possible explanations included Christ's participation in a wedding ceremony in heaven as well as Christ's participation in an act of ritual purification before He could return to earth.

was lost, while Jesus argued that if a person had asked forgiveness for each sin and had kept the commandments, that person was eligible for the saving grace of Christ's death on the cross (White, 1888: 479-491). Adventists believed that when this investigative judgment was over, Christ would then return to earth and inaugurate the millennium.

Adventists reinterpreted the significance of October 22, 1844 to mean the date on which the judgment of saints and sinners began in heaven (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 6). This interpretation allowed the Adventists to maintain a connection to Miller, but also forge their own identity since both believed October 22 to be the date that Christ began the work of judgment. For Miller, the judgment was to have taken place on the earth, for Adventists the judgment was now taking place in the sanctuary in heaven. Adventists were now fully engaged in the work of dissonance reduction. Based on the innovative doctrine of the investigative judgment, Adventists began to focus on proper commandment-keeping, both to identify themselves as part of the remnant Church, and to ensure a favorable outcome in the divine judgment scenario playing out in heaven (and also as a way to distinguish themselves from other Millerite schismatic groups who did not keep the Sabbath) (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 35).

The Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20 provided SDAs with a list of commandments that they felt they must observe. Observance of these commandments showed their loyalty to God. As they looked at other Protestant denominations, they saw that all of these groups worshiped on Sunday in apparent violation of the fourth commandment, which (according to SDA interpretation)

promoted Saturday as the only acceptable day of rest/worship. Under the guidance of White and her alleged visions, early Adventists began to advocate the necessity of Saturday observance on the seventh day of the week as the only true fulfillment of the fourth commandment. Adventists also began to promote the idea that all who worshipped on Sunday, the first day of the week, received the “mark of the beast” referred to in Revelation 13: 16-18;⁵⁵ 14: 9-11.⁵⁶ Adventists claimed that the Catholic Church was responsible for Sunday worship (and therefore also responsible for the mark of the beast) since the Catholic Church changed the official day of worship from Saturday to Sunday.⁵⁷ Adventists taught that all Christians were breaking the law of God by not keeping Saturday as the Sabbath. They believed that God used obedience to the fourth commandment requiring Sabbath observance as a new test of a Christian’s loyalty and love for God. Therefore, they saw the Sabbath as God’s seal on the remnant church (Schwarz, 1979: 170, 171).

⁵⁵ “He [the second beast] also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is a man’s number. His number is 666” (Revelation 13: 16-18 NIV).

⁵⁶ “A third angel followed them [previous two angels] and said in a loud voice: ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises forever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image or for anyone who receives the mark of his name’” (Revelation 14: 9-11 NIV).” SDA commentators are uncertain whether the “mark” is a physical mark upon a person’s body indicating that they worship on Sunday or simply a metaphor for those who worship on Sunday. Seventh-day Adventist’s do not define what the literal mark is, but simply claim that the “mark of the beast” identifies all who worship on Sunday (Froom, 1971: 128-129; White, 1888: 445-450).

⁵⁷ White claimed the Pope changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday under the direct authority of the Roman Empire (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 36, 37; Froom, 1971: 42, 43; White, 1882: 64, 65; 1888: 445-448). Adventists still hold this position (Froom, 1971: 128, 129).

Through their acceptance of alleged prophetic guidance from Ellen White and their belief in the necessity of Saturday observance, Seventh-day Adventists were slowly creating an identity that estranged them from the larger Protestant world. Based on White's *Great Controversy* (1888), Seventh-day Adventists believed that at the end of time, Sabbath-keepers would be the only people on earth under God's control, while everyone else would be under the Devil's control (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 45, 46). Another SDA teaching, based on White's *Early Writings* (1882), further isolated SDAs from the Protestant world. In *Early Writings*, White said that all Christians who refused to accept the first angel's message of Revelation 14: 6-7⁵⁸ rejected the light from heaven and fell from God's favor. Adventists taught that William Miller had begun to proclaim this first angel's message when he proclaimed that 1844 was an important date in salvation history (in Canright, 1915: 39; White, 1882: 236, 237). Adventists believed that their interpretation of 1844 as the beginning of the investigative judgment in heaven written about in Revelation 14: 7 was the fulfillment of the first angel's message since verse 7 contains the statement "because the hour of his judgment has come." Therefore, it was necessary for a person to believe, as SDAs now taught, that the investigative judgment had begun in heaven on October 22, 1844, in order to obtain salvation. In the SDA mindset, Miller's mistaken interpretation, as well as their reinterpretation of the 1844 date, was still light from heaven.

⁵⁸ "Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth – to every nation, tribe, language, and people. He said in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water'" (Revelation 14: 6-7 NIV).

The SDA message and identity included not only an indictment of the Protestant world, but also of American society and government as well. In the SDA interpretation of Revelation 13: 1-18, the “first beast” was the Roman Catholic Church (this interpretation was in line with other Protestant denominations).⁵⁹ The SDA interpretation, however, of the “second beast” differed from other Protestants. In Revelation 13: 1-18, the second beast erects an image of the first beast and forces the entire world to worship this image (Wilson, 2007: 89). Adventists identified this “second beast” as Protestant America, and they claimed that the erection of an image to the first beast was Protestant churches in America working in conjunction with the United States government to enforce Sunday worship (White, 1888: 439-446). When SDAs proclaimed that the United States of America was the second beast of Revelation 13, they put themselves in opposition to Protestantism (who view the second beast, also identified as the ‘false prophet’ as a man and not a country [Butler, 1974: 180-182; Wilson, 2007: 57, 90]).⁶⁰ The SDA interpretation of the second beast also put the SDA organization at odds with American society. Since the SDA organization claimed that in the future the American government would actively persecute them for their beliefs, this naturally led many SDA adherents to mistrust the United States government. In 1892, after the United States signed the first Sunday legislation, Ellen White wrote that Protestants were joining hands with

⁵⁹ See *The Beast of Revelation* by Kenneth Gentry (1989) for a Protestant interpretation of the First Beast of Revelation. Ellen White’s *Great Controversy* (pg 439) equates the first beast with the Roman Catholic Church.

⁶⁰ The exact identity of the second beast has divided Protestants for years. Various interpretations of the second beast include a false spiritual leader who will convince the Jewish nation to accept the “Antichrist” (Satan) as the Messiah (Grant, 1992: 115-119; Lindsey; 1997: 189-192), and the “Antichrist’s main minister of propaganda” who controls the world’s financial institutions (LaHaye and Jenkins, 1999: 283- 287).

Catholics to stamp out the fourth commandment. Many Adventists, including White felt that because the secular government had (in SDA minds) entered into an alliance with Sunday keeping Protestant churches (to promote a false day of worship), the end of time could happen at any moment and that the persecution SDAs had feared from their government had begun (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 35, 36; Knight, 1987: 89, 93).

As Adventists continued to build their identity, they began to develop from a loosely associated group of disappointed Millerites into their own social movement. According to Joseph Zygmunt, some groups that share millennial expectations occasionally develop into more organized collectives with stable leadership and internal structures. These groups develop an ideology and rituals that reflect a more enduring social movement (Zygmunt, 1972: 249). More than fifteen years after the great disappointment of 1844, the movement founded by James and Ellen White and a few other disenfranchised Millerite followers officially organized and settled on a name,⁶¹ a sign of its burgeoning identity. The name Seventh-day Adventist reflected their novel identity based on two of their major doctrines, Sabbath keeping and a continuing belief in the imminent return (Advent) of Christ (Schwarz, 1979: 94 – 95).⁶²

Over time, the early Adventists began to look for converts to their new belief system, providing yet another confirmation of Festinger's dissonance

⁶¹ The Seventh-day Adventist organization did not print its first official statement of doctrines until 1872, twelve years after they settled on a name and incorporated as a religious organization in 1860 (Schwarz, 1972: 167).

⁶² Early Adventists favored the names 'the remnant,' 'the scattered flock,' and 'the Church of God.' In fact, most favored the name, but 'Church of God,' was one that other groups used, and so they finally settled on Seventh-day Adventist to identify their major doctrines (Schwarz, 1979:94- 95).

reduction strategies: proselytizing. Festinger said that the establishment of a social reality by gaining the agreement and support of other people was one of the major ways in which an individual could change a cognition when the pressures to change it were present (Festinger, 1957: 21). Festinger wrote:

Certain movements, such as millennial and messianic movements, seek social support through mass proselytization following an unequivocal disconfirmation of a belief system. These movements share common characteristics. First, a belief or a set of beliefs is held with conviction by a number of people. Second, the belief, at least in part, has sufficient implication for the affairs of the daily world so that the believers take action in accordance with the belief. Third, the action is sufficiently important, and sufficiently difficult to undo, that the believers are, in a very real sense, committed to the belief. Fourth, at least some part of the belief is sufficiently specific and concerned with the real world so that unequivocal disproof or disconfirmation is possible. Fifth, this possible disconfirmation actually occurs, usually in the form of the nonoccurrence of a predicted event within the time limits set for its occurrence (Festinger, 1957: 247-248).

The early SDA organization exhibited all of Festinger's characteristics of a group that would actively seek out converts in order to reduce dissonance.

Festinger felt that a social group played an important role in the reduction of dissonance. The processes of social communication and social influence were inextricably interwoven with the process of dissonance reduction. The larger the

numbers of people that an individual knew who already agreed with a given opinion, the easier it would be for an individual (or a group) to ignore or at least minimize the dissonance they might feel from dissenting opinions (Festinger, 1957: 177). Said differently, SDAs emphasized proselytizing in order to gain the support of others for their new theology of the sanctuary and investigative judgment. The larger the numbers of converts to the SDA organization, the more adherents could convince themselves that their beliefs were correct, thereby reducing any feelings of dissonance.

Sociologist Robert Prus suggested that religious groups often purposely create dissonance within their potential converts by contrasting the future of non-believers with the “more desirable future” (available only to group members). Once the group establishes feelings of dissonance within the potential convert, the next step is to convince that person that a viable solution to the dissonance can be found through acceptance of the groups’ beliefs. Thus, the group first creates dissonance for the potential convert and then offers group membership as a strategy of dissonance reduction (Prus, 1976: 128). As SDAs began proselytizing, however, they did not need to create dissonance in their potential converts because they restricted their activities to former Millerites, those who had experienced the disappointment of 1844 with them and wanted to reduce the dissonance they felt from that failing.⁶³ This self-imposed restriction is not surprising, considering dissonance theory states that initial attempts at influence

⁶³ Only later, when SDAs began proselytizing outside of the circle of former Millerites, did they employ a strategy of dissonance creation in order to offer their organization as the solution to this artificially created tension.

(proselytizing) are more effective on persons for whom it reduces dissonance (Festinger, 1957: 217).

Initially, several of the groups that splintered away from Miller's movement after it failed felt that Jesus would return still within a few years of 1844, and some continued to set specific dates for that return (Melton, 1989: 23). Between 1844 and the end of the decade, SDA conversions came primarily from among those who had waited in vain with William Miller. SDAs believed that salvation was possible only to those who had followed Miller so, for the first years of its existence Seventh-day Adventism was an exclusive religion (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 6, 256; Butler, 1974: 178-179). The "shut-door" belief as it soon became known stated that God had shut the door of salvation to all who had rejected Miller's call (Knight, 1993: 236-242; Linden, 1982: 24-31; Schwarz, 1979: 70).⁶⁴

In 1851, Adventists abandoned the "shut door" doctrine (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 36) and actively began to seek converts from beyond the circle of former Millerite followers. Soon, initial attempts to gain adherents from a small pool of potential converts gave way to mass proselytizing. Regarding mass proselytizing, Festinger wrote that attempts to reduce dissonance through mass proselytizing were attempts to gain support for new cognitions concerning the dissonance-causing event. He suggested that these new cognitions may include new explanations of the event, rationalizations, "new" evidence and the like. Festinger went on to say that if a person could surround himself with others who

⁶⁴ Initially SDAs did not think it was necessary to spread their message to those outside the initial Millerite camp, since God had shut the door of salvation to all "outsiders" (thus making salvation for all non-believers impossible).

adhered to the new explanation, that individual could reduce the dissonance to some extent and retain the belief. While this may work to reduce the dissonance, it would not eliminate it. In order to further reduce the dissonance, the individual or group would likely engage in mass proselytizing in an effort to convince as many people as possible of the correctness of their “new” cognitions. The more people believed, the further this reduced the dissonance (Festinger, 1957: 200-202, 246-251).

SDAs actively began to proselytize from a wider pool of perspective converts in order to gain a larger number of adherents, and in doing so, convince themselves of the accuracy of their new belief system. The larger the organization became, the more SDAs could convince themselves that their new doctrines were indeed correct and that God was blessing them. This belief that God was blessing their proselytizing efforts with larger numbers of converts served to more fully reduce the dissonance they felt.

As Seventh-day Adventists continued to search for their identity, more radical leaders, like James and Ellen White, began to look for more commandments they could keep in order to show their loyalty to God. Initially they observed “foot-washing” and the “holy kiss” as signs of their devotion (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 34, 35). This desire to show their loyalty to God not only led these early SDAs to adopt a legalistic interpretation of salvation (evidenced in their ideas concerning the investigative judgment and Sabbath-keeping), but also to develop a culture of fear and continual self-searching.

Fear played a pivotal role in the formation of SDA identity. Ellen White wrote that the first step on the road to hell was disbelief in her testimonies (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 31; White, 1885d: 211). Put simply, disbelief in the prophetic role of Ellen White meant that a person would die in hell rather than live eternally in heaven, but this was not the only fear-inducing belief. As noted earlier, SDAs believed that Christ was at that very moment actively engaged in the work of judgment in heaven, and every SDA knew that his or her name could come up for judgment at any moment. Therefore, they found it imperative to observe the commandments as carefully as possible in order to ensure a favorable outcome in the heavenly judgment scenario. SDAs could not live with the security of knowing they were saved since salvation depended not on their acceptance of the death of Christ on the cross for the forgiveness of sin, but on their ability to keep the commandments, especially the commandment regarding the Sabbath since Sabbath-keeping was the basis for the investigative judgment. This type of thinking meant that Adventists needed to censor their activities on a daily basis in an attempt to alleviate, as far as possible, their fear of judgment.

Joseph Zygmunt may have been thinking of the Seventh-day Adventist organization when he wrote:

Rather than seeing itself as a movement having a temporary mission, the millenarian group comes to conceive of itself as the organizational link between the supernatural and earthly phases of the millennial drama, the bridgehead to the new future, entrusted with the responsibility of

maintaining and spreading the faith until the time for complete fulfillment finally arrives (Zygmunt, 1972: 265).

Over time, as they waited for Christ to return, the adherents of the SDA organization slowly moved away from a collection of disappointed ex-Millerites toward an organization with a distinctive identity and a clearer understanding of its mission. The SDA reinterpretation of Miller's prophetic disconfirmation had led to the peculiar doctrines of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment. Since SDAs did not know either when the judgment would end (an event that would immediately precede Christ's true return to earth), or when an individual's name might appear before the investigative judgment, they felt that they had little time in which to share this new truth with the rest of the world. This belief that they were nearing the end of the world and had little time to share this truth with outsiders, led adherents to increase their proselytizing. It was in this climate that the first dissenters appeared to challenge the identity that Seventh-day Adventists were creating for themselves.

Chapter 2: The Necessity of Dissent in Group Dynamics: Durkheim,
Erikson and the Rise of Adventist Dissenters

As I demonstrate in this chapter, the SDA organization faced continual challenges from dissenters. The authenticity and interpretation of White's visions as well as questions regarding her own authenticity and motivation were, and continue to be, topics of debate within the organization. As the SDA organization continued to grow, dissent against bureaucratic control became another issue for Adventism, as many early dissenters questioned not only organizational control, but also the truth of specific doctrines relating to the sanctuary, the judgment, Saturday observance, and the legitimacy of Ellen White's prophetic role. While the SDA organization produced many dissenters,⁶⁵ I focus on three specific cases that cover the spectrum of early dissent towards the SDA organization. These cases are Dudley M. Canright, the combined threat posed by Ellet J Waggoner and Alonzo T Jones, and John Harvey Kellogg.

⁶⁵ Adventist historian R.W. Schwarz gave a partial list of early Adventist dissidents. They include H.S. Case and C. P. Russell who defected from the SDA organization in 1853 because of Ellen White. Case and Russell claimed that Adventists exalted White over the Bible. Schwarz also included B. F. Snook and W. H. Brinkerhoff, both of whom attempted to detach the Iowa Conference of Seventh-day Adventists from the main body in 1865 over criticisms of White's inspiration and other doctrinal issues. Their followers formed the Marion party and eventually established a splinter church known as The Church of God (Seventh-day). In 1899, the "holy flesh" movement, led by A. F. Ballenger swept the Adventist organization. This movement advocated perfect, sinless living in preparation for Christ's return. Indiana Conference President R. S. Donnell and Conference Revivalist S. S. Davis advocated this position. After White denounced the movement both men repented, however, Davis eventually became a Baptist minister after the SDA organization dropped him from membership. Finally, during the early part of the twentieth century, A. F. Ballenger began to teach a different interpretation of the sanctuary doctrine than the one Seventh-day Adventists taught. Seventh-day Adventist leaders challenged his interpretation because of White's visions concerning the sanctuary. The SDA reliance on White's visions to interpret the sanctuary doctrine led Ballenger to challenge White's inspiration. When Ballenger accused White of plagiarism and promoting error, the SDA organization dropped him from membership and took away his ministerial credentials (Schwarz, 1979: 445-449). Adventist dissident Dudley Canright also claimed that the SDA organization expelled many ministers and nonprofessionals for refusing to accept that Ellen White was a prophet (Canright, 1915: 34).

In *Wayward Puritans* (1966), sociologist Kai Erikson developed the theme of group identity through suppression of deviance (dissent), which he applied to Puritan settlements in Massachusetts during the seventeenth century. Erikson wrote that deviant acts create a sense of mutuality among the people of a community by supplying a focus for group feelings. Deviance makes people more alert to the interests they share in common and draws attention to those values that constitute the collective conscience of the community (Erikson, 1966: 4).

A few years earlier, sociologist Robert K. Merton also had written about the values and interests that a community shared in common, and how these communal feelings regulated individual behavior. Merton said that institutional norms set the limits of legitimate behaviors, and prescribed the range of what the particular institution expected people to normatively believe and do (Merton, 1959: 178). Paying homage to Emile Durkheim's famous thesis that crime is a functional necessity of a healthy society, sociologist Robert Nisbet concluded that only the recognition of, and response to, social problems (in this case deviance), reinforced the moral consciousness (Nisbet, 1971: 3-4).

Erikson echoed the theme of society's need to recognize and respond to deviant behavior when he wrote that in the language of sociology, communities are boundary-maintaining. He continued by saying that a human community maintains boundaries in which its members confine themselves concerning their conduct (and belief) and tends to view any activity that drifts outside those boundaries to be deviant. Erikson wrote:

The material with which a society marks its boundaries is the behavior of its members-or rather, the network of interactions between its members. Therefore, group boundaries remain a meaningful point of reference only so long as persons on the fringes of the group repeatedly test them while at the same time persons chosen to represent the group's inner morality defend them. For these reasons, deviant behavior may be, in controlled amounts, an important condition for preserving the stability of social life (Erikson, 1966: 10, 13).

Deviant behavior then can include any act that tests the boundaries of the community, ranging from a criminal act in secular society to a challenge to the belief structure of a religious group such as the Seventh-day Adventist organization. It also seems clear from Erikson's statement that deviant behavior is also important for preserving a stable group identity, a concept that Durkheim also advocated in *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895: 67). As I already demonstrated in the introduction, Erikson expanded on Durkheim's thesis by saying that crime was a natural social activity and was an integral part of all healthy societies. Deviance performed a needed service to society by drawing the members of a given society together, and social organization would be impossible without it (Erikson, 1966: 3-4; see also Merton, 1949: 61-62).⁶⁶

Durkheim's work on social formation, especially in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), laid the foundation for Erikson to make these

⁶⁶ As already noted in the introduction, deviance and dissent are interchangeable terms. Therefore, just as social organization would be impossible without deviance, so would the social organization of a religious group such as the SDA organization be impossible without dissenters.

grand claims about group identity and formation.⁶⁷ In *Elementary Forms*, Durkheim posited that a society could only achieve its goals by demanding the cooperation of the individuals that make up that society. Furthermore, he suggested that society requires individuals to put the interests of the society over their own individual interests. Durkheim said that individuals defer to society out of respect and obey society's boundaries out of respect for its moral authority and influence. Metaphorically, he said that society speaks through the mouths of individuals who affirm it and the collection of all these voices is more forceful (dominant) than an individual (dissenting) voice (Durkheim, 1912: 209-210).

Durkheim went on to say that society acts against dissent through moral censure and physical repression, thus strengthening its dominance and re-affirming its shared convictions (Durkheim, 1912: 209-210). When a person denies or questions a shared belief, society forbids it (Durkheim, 1912: 215). In this way, society works to silence dissent and strengthen its own identity. In fact, according to sociologist Howard S. Becker, society creates deviance through a process of labeling. Becker said that "social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders" (Becker, 1963: 8-9).

⁶⁷ If we apply Durkheim's concept of a "society" to the official Seventh-day Adventist organization, it is easy to see how his concepts of social identity and control of dissenting (deviant) opinions apply to the formation of this (and other) religious groups. Howard Becker said that any small group that shares a certain kind of common understanding regarding various things is its own culture (society.) A religious group is one example that Becker gave of this kind of small group. He went on to say that culture arises essentially in response to a problem faced in common by a group of people (Becker, 1963: 80-81). The early SDA founders did indeed share a common problem and in responding to that problem created their own 'society' or culture. Dissenters reacted to this newly created society.

The SDA organization has an extensive history of identifying (labeling), and punishing dissenters. During its formative years, however, the identification and punishment of dissenters was especially important as the new movement struggled to form and maintain an identity and establish the boundaries that would contain and shape that identity. While many may view dissenters and dissenting opinions as negative, they are integral to the maintenance of sectarian boundaries as both Durkheim and Erikson suggested. During these formative years, the SDA organization was beginning to gain an understanding of its distinctive identity, to establish its boundaries through theology and practice, and to proclaim boldly that identity to an unbelieving world.

In order to become a unique body with clearly defined boundaries that separated it from the rest of the world, the SDA organization needed to remind itself continually of its “special” identity. In the words of Erikson, “Deviant persons often supply an important service to society by patrolling the outer edges of group space and by providing a contrast [that] gives the rest of the community some sense of their own territorial identity” (Erikson, 1966: 195-196). Dissenters gave Seventh-day Adventism the opportunity to reinforce its boundaries and in doing so reaffirm its theological territorial identity.

Dudley M. Canright (1840 – 1919)

In their article, “Social Movement Organizations,” sociologists Mayer Zald and Roberta Ash stated that “the more the ideology of an organization leads to a questioning of the basis of authority the greater the likelihood of factions and splitting” (Zald and Ash, 1966: 337). The history of the SDA organization gives

numerous examples of Zald and Ash's statement. The ideology and beliefs of the SDA organization caused many factions, and dissent was a common feature in the early years of the movement. With the aid of what the organization alleged to be prophetic guidance from God through a prophetess named Ellen White, and their reinterpretation of the failed prophecies of William Miller, the SDA organization had established itself with a distinctive identity in both its theology and its practice. It is not surprising then that throughout its life, Seventh-day Adventism produced dissenters who questioned the ideology of the organization as well as the basis for its authority.

Dudley Canright was one of the first dissenters to openly question SDA identity and its basis of authority, especially the prophetic role of Ellen White, despite the fact that Canright had once been a close friend of her and staunch supporter of her alleged visions.⁶⁸ As I demonstrate, Canright not only questioned the validity of White's prophetic gift, but also the role that she played within the SDA organization, both as a prophet and a biblical interpreter. Furthermore, he believed that the SDA organization had no right to criticize other emerging sectarian groups such as the Latter-day Saints or Christian Scientists for the reliance of those groups on a prophet, when Adventists claimed to have their own prophet. Canright also disagreed with many of the fundamental doctrines of the SDA organization. The ideology of the SDA organization led dissenters like Canright to question the basis of SDA authority, which in turn implied the possibility of schisms within the organization based on Canright's positions.

⁶⁸ Adventist historians claim that the White family and Canright family often went on family vacations together (Schwarz, 1979: 468, 469).

Canright became a Seventh-day Adventist adherent in 1859 at the age of nineteen (Schwartz, 1979: 464). He was not among the early SDA pioneers who had initially followed William Miller and then experienced the disappointment of 1844. In fact, no one knows if Canright's family followed Miller. Canright was not part of the initial theological debates among early SDAs that led to their statement of beliefs, nor was he part of the official organization of the movement. By the time Canright became an adherent, White was firmly established in her prophetic role and her husband, James, was President of the organization.

By his own admission, Canright did not initially accept all of the SDA doctrines. He first accepted the SDA interpretation of the Sabbath and then other points of faith followed (Canright, 1919: 11). In 1861, James White gave Canright a Bible and a set of "prophetic charts"⁶⁹ and told him to become a preacher. Canright took James White's advice and the SDA organization ordained him to the ministry in 1865 before sending him to work with another SDA minister in New England (Land, 2005: 54; Neufeld, 1996: 285; Schwarz, 1979: 464).

During his early ministry, Canright distinguished himself in several areas. It was a common practice among early SDA ministers to challenge ministers of other Protestant groups to public theological debates, and Canright demonstrated considerable skill in this area (Schwartz, 1979: 464-465). As well, early in his

⁶⁹ It is unclear what these charts were. Canright claimed that the SDAs used Miller's charts and dates to establish the sanctuary doctrine, so the charts may have been Miller's or they may have been charts that SDA leaders amended to fit their own needs.

ministry, Canright wrote a strong defense of Ellen White (Canright, 1919: 13),⁷⁰ and while some SDAs were beginning to question her role, Canright initially was one of her strongest defenders.⁷¹

Despite his early successes in ministry and his initial defense of White, Canright had a difficult and tumultuous relationship both with the SDA organization and with Ellen and James White. SDA historians suggest that Canright suffered from depression and doubt, and displayed pride and a critical spirit of others.⁷² According to SDA sources, several times during Canright's early ministry, SDA leaders such as J.N. Andrews and George Butler worked to keep Canright from leaving the ministry due to his periods of depression and doubt (Neufeld, 1996: 285; Schwarz, 1979: 464-465).⁷³

In 1873, according to SDA historians, Canright left the ministry for the first time and moved to California to become a farmer. Allegedly, this move was the result of a rupture in the relationship between the Canright family and the White family.⁷⁴ Eventually Canright rejoined the ministry, but in 1880, after the death of his first wife, Lucretia, Canright again left the ministry in order to give public lectures on elocution. During this time, SDA historians allege that Canright stopped keeping the Sabbath and began to look for work as a minister in

⁷⁰ He later changed his mind. In defense of this change, Canright said, "A wise man changes his mind seldom, a fool never" (Canright, 1919: 13). I will discuss his changing opinion of Ellen White in more detail later in this chapter.

⁷¹ Canright claimed that the SDA organization excommunicated members and entire congregations who did not believe that Ellen White was a prophet (Canright, 1919: 36).

⁷² Adventist apologists have charged that Canright was intolerant of external control, unable to accept criticism, and unable to accept the guidance of Ellen White (Neufeld, 1996: 285).

⁷³ Canright denied these charges and refuted them in his subsequent books.

⁷⁴ Early in 1873, the two families had taken an extended vacation together during which James and Ellen White attempted to counsel the Canright family on what they deemed were character defects in both Canright and his wife. A fight ensued and in the aftermath, Canright left the ministry. Early the next year, after reconciliation with Ellen White, Canright again entered the ministry, this time working in California (Schwarz, 1979: 464-465).

other, non-SDA churches. After returning to SDA ministry in 1881, Canright again left the ministry to farm in 1882, citing disbelief in the inspiration of Ellen White as the main reason for his departure (Schwarz, 1979: 466).

He returned to SDA ministry in 1884 after a public reconciliation with White, but by 1887, he no longer felt that he could remain a Seventh-day Adventist. Canright stated that the reason he no longer considered himself a Seventh-day Adventist was his continuing disbelief in the prophetic role of White. He also cited his disbelief in the major SDA doctrines of the sanctuary, the observance of the Ten Commandments (especially the Sabbath), the role of the United States in SDA eschatology, and health reform as other reasons for his departure (Canright, 1914: 50-52, 67-80).

After leaving the SDA organization, Canright published three books in which he laid out his objections to SDA identity. In 1889, Canright published his first book, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, which was republished in 1914. In 1915, he published his second book, *The Lord's Day from Neither Catholics nor Pagans*, which dealt specifically with the SDA belief that Saturday was the only day of worship acceptable to God. His third book, entitled *Life of Mrs. E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet: Her Claims Refuted*, published in 1919, dealt with the alleged prophetic role of Ellen White.

Seventh-day Adventism Renounced

Seventh-day Adventism Renounced, Canright's first book after leaving the SDA organization, revealed both the depth of his dissent from Adventism and his grasp of theological issues. While his subsequent books dealt in more detail with

specific issues within Adventism – such as the correct day of worship and Ellen White’s prophetic role – *Renounced* covered many, if not all, of Canright’s dissenting issues with SDA identity.⁷⁵ He began by disagreeing with the SDA reinterpretation of William Miller’s 1844 prophecy.

As demonstrated in Chapter One, SDAs believed that while William Miller had been incorrect in certain aspects of his prophecy, he had still begun an important work that God had called the SDA organization to finish. Canright challenged this belief because he felt that William Miller’s entire message had been false, that 1844 had not been a significant date in eschatological history, and therefore, that Miller was a false prophet, written about in Deuteronomy 18: 20-22 (Canright, 1914: 71). Canright saw further evidence for his condemnation of Seventh-day Adventists in the fact that Miller had condemned the SDA attempt to find new meaning for 1844 (Canright, 1914: 78). For Canright, Miller was a false prophet and therefore, so too were SDAs if they continued to base their reason for existence on Miller’s failed prediction, no matter how cleverly they tried to reinterpret that prediction.

Canright also disagreed with many other SDA theological positions. These positions-based on SDA interpretations of eschatological events written about in the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation-were fundamental to Seventh-day Adventism’s identity. The first theological position against which Canright dissented was the SDA interpretation of the “mark of the beast” written about in Revelation 13: 11-18. As outlined in Chapter One, SDAs referred to the

⁷⁵ Chapter five of *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced* gave a list of Canright’s objections to the Seventh-day Adventist system.

observance of Sunday as the holy day instead of Saturday as the mark of the beast and claimed that all Christians who went to church on Sunday received this mark at the end of time and because of it would not go to heaven. Adventists also taught that as the end of time nears, the United States government, working in conjunction with the Catholic Church and Sunday-keeping Protestants would persecute and kill all who keep Saturday as the holy day.⁷⁶ SDAs claimed that the United States was the “two horned beast” in Revelation that enforced persecution upon all who worshiped on Saturday. Canright argued that beyond the alleged visions of White, SDAs had no proof for their theory of the “two horned beast” or the “mark of the beast.” Canright argued that the SDA organization falsely identified the United States as the two horned beast (Canright, 1914: 89-101),⁷⁷ and that the mark of the beast could not be Sunday observance since Christ abolished the law (including Sabbath observance) when He died on the cross (Canright, 1914: 101-109).

As I showed in the previous chapter, SDAs also believed that in 1844, Christ did not come back to earth, but rather began a second phase of his redemptive ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. This belief meant that Christ’s death on the cross was insufficient to procure humanity’s salvation, a belief taught by all mainstream Protestant churches (Linden, 1982: 29). Therefore, according to SDAs, all who believed that Christ’s death at Calvary saved them from sin and assured them of eternal life were wrong, and only those who understood this new “sanctuary” message were eligible for salvation. Canright argued that the

⁷⁶ Ellen White devoted all of Chapter 25 of her book *The Great Controversy* (1888) to this theme.

⁷⁷ In these same pages, Canright identified the two horned beast the Papacy.

Adventist “sanctuary” message was false and that it had led them to another false belief, the “shut door,” --a belief that salvation was impossible for all but a select few after 1844 (Canright, 1914: 117-128). As I have shown, Adventists eventually rejected the “shut door” belief but continued to teach the “sanctuary” doctrine (Knight, 1993: 313-314).⁷⁸

Canright spent much of the rest of *Renounced* arguing against the fundamental belief in Saturday observance held by the SDA organization. SDAs argued that the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) of the Old Testament was (and is) still binding upon Christians.⁷⁹ In order to argue that Christians were still required to observe Saturday, SDAs taught that Christians still are required to keep the Law⁸⁰ and that God instituted Sabbath observance at Creation, not as part of the law given to the Jews recorded in the book of Exodus, over 2000 years after the creation account. Adventists taught that a major portion of the investigative judgment that Christ began in 1844 when he went in to the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary involved deciding who had kept the “true” Sabbath and who had rejected it in favor of the “false” Sabbath.⁸¹ Canright argued that Christ’s death on the cross did away with the entire Old Testament law, including the

⁷⁸ According to Knight, Seventh-day Adventists eventually reinterpreted the “shut door” to mean that God had shut the door to the first compartment of the heavenly sanctuary when he opened the door into the Most Holy Place and began the work of atonement in 1844. This idea that Adventist modified the shut door theory differs from Bull and Lockhart’s assertion that Seventh-day Adventists rejected the shut door belief completely.

⁷⁹ This belief is related to the “mark of the beast” discussed earlier.

⁸⁰ SDAs make a distinction between the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20: 3-17, and the rest of the Mosaic Law. SDAs claim that the Ten Commandments form a separate “moral” law that continues forever, while Christ ended the need to observe the rest of the law when He died (SDA fundamental beliefs #18 and #19 embody this belief and are available at www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamentals/index.html.) SDAs no longer teach that a person’s ability to keep the law saves him or her, but they do speak about sanctification that leads to perfection as an essential requirement of salvation (Rice, 1985: 245- 254).

⁸¹ See Chapters 25 and 26 of White’s *The Great Controversy*.

command to observe the Sabbath, a view that all major Protestant denominations hold. Canright also argued that God did not command Sabbath observance at creation; rather he commanded it only of the Jewish nation at Mount Sinai. Therefore, Sabbath observance was only binding upon the Jewish nation, not upon Christians as White and the SDA organization claimed.⁸²

Canright also claimed that many prominent SDA leaders left the organization before he did, and that most of them left because of their disbelief in White's prophetic status and her alleged visions (Canright, 1914: 61-66). Disbelief in White was a theme that ran throughout Canright's dissent. Canright began to distrust the leadership of Ellen and James White and the prophetic gift of Ellen White early in his SDA experience. He stated that he often saw Ellen White treat SDA ministers so badly and with such a critical spirit that many ministers left the organization rather than continue to allow her to treat them as she did (Canright, 1914: 41-42).

Canright also lost confidence in White's claim to divine revelation when, within a span of two weeks, he received two contradictory messages from White. The first was White's claim that God had shown her that Canright was the "right man for the job" as Ohio Conference President, even though Canright alleged later that he had already planned on leaving the SDA organization at that point. White's claim that God had shown her that Canright was the correct choice for president bothered Canright since White claimed that God revealed people's hidden motives and thoughts to her. A week after the SDA organization elected

⁸² Chapters 9, 12, and 13 of *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced* deal with the Sabbath issue from an Old Testament/Jewish perspective. Chapters 14 – 18 deal with the issue from a New Testament perspective and focus on Paul's writings regarding the Law and Sabbath observance.

Canright to the position of Ohio Conference president, he resigned and moved east. Within a week of his resignation, White wrote Canright a long letter in which she claimed that God had revealed to her that Canright was a child of hell and the wickedest of all men (Canright, 1914: 46-47).

Canright questioned why God would give Ellen White two contradictory “revelations” and also how God could have erred in telling White that Canright should be president in the first place, since God would surely have known of Canright’s intention to leave the SDA organization. For Canright, the contradicting “revelations” meant that either God did not reveal to White what White claimed God revealed to her, or that White wrote her last revelation to him out of anger and resentment over his leaving the SDA organization, rather than on the basis of a divine revelation as she claimed. Although *Renounced* offered only a brief overview of his disbelief in White’s prophetic role, Canright devoted another book, *Life of Mrs. E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet: Her Claims Refuted*, to a more thorough analysis of her prophetic claims.

Life of Mrs. E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet: Her Claims Refuted

As mentioned earlier, leaders within an institution or organization define what they consider to be normative behaviors for adherents. These normative behaviors indicate the range of actions and beliefs that organizational leaders expect from adherents (Merton, 1959: 178). For the SDA organization, belief in the prophetic role of White was an organizational norm and the organization expected its adherents to believe in, and not question, her prophetic status. As I

have already shown, Canright began his career in Adventism as a firm defender of White and the role she played in Adventist identity, initially conforming to the normative belief in Ellen White that the organization expected of its adherents. Canright claimed that the writings of Ellen White formed the foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist organization and initially defended White's divine inspiration claiming it was the same as biblical writers (Canright, 1919: 40; Schwartz, 1979: 465). Yet later in life, after he had renounced the Adventist faith, he claimed that he had always distrusted Ellen White and her alleged visions (Schwarz, 1979: 469). As one who had worked closely with Ellen and James White and who had been at the heart of the SDA organization as one of its leading proponents, Canright had a singular vantage point from which to comment on White's alleged prophetic role. Furthermore, he was in a position to provide unparalleled insight into the role that she played in the formation of Adventist identity. Since he had at one time been one of her staunchest allies and defenders, his subsequent turn as one of her chief critics was damaging not only to White, but also potentially to the entire organization.

What caused Canright's change of heart? Upon what basis and/or information did his belief turn to doubt? According to Canright himself, he always had a distrust of White, even though he had defended her and remained a Seventh-day Adventist. Finally, he felt compelled to change his mind because of the weight of damaging evidence he saw and collected regarding her early life and "revelations," much of which he claimed the SDA leadership tried to suppress (Canright, 1919: 13). I summarize this "damaging evidence" in three broad

categories. First, Canright questioned how the early SDA organization could use Ellen White as proof of its special identity when other sectarian groups also claimed to have a prophet. Second, Canright had doubts about the source of her alleged visions, and suggested she suffered from a medical condition that brought on her alleged visions. Finally, Canright questioned the authenticity of her prophetic gift based on the contradictory content of her visions.

The Legitimacy of Ellen G. White as Adventist Identity Marker

Since SDAs pointed to Ellen White as an identifier of their alleged remnant⁸³ status, in order to avoid further cognitive dissonance, they needed to believe in her and suppress what doubts they might entertain. Canright could not suppress his doubts, and therefore, he called White's alleged prophetic gift into question.

Adventists used Ellen White as an identity marker and alleged that her appearance in their midst identified their group as the remnant church alluded to in Revelation 18: 4.⁸⁴ Therefore, in Canright's opinion, it was impossible to accept the SDA organization without accepting Ellen White as a prophet (Canright, 1919: 11). Canright said, "A new convert must believe that God inspired Ellen White, this belief is a test of faith for Adventists" (Canright, 1919:

⁸³ The SDA organization teaches that near the end of time, which it characterizes as a time full of spiritual apostasy, God has called a special remnant church to keep the commandments of God and tell the world that God has begun the work of judgment in heaven. The SDA organization teaches that it is the remnant church. See SDA fundamental belief #13 and #18 on the official SDA website: www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental.

⁸⁴ "Then I heard another voice from heaven say: 'Come out of her [Babylon], my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues'" (Revelation 18: 4 NIV). Seventh-day Adventists allege that this text identifies the remnant church as those who come out of Babylon. SDAs teach that Babylon is comprised of the Roman Catholic Church and all Protestant churches that follow doctrines advocated by the Catholic Church such as Sunday worship and the doctrine of an eternally burning hell (White, 1888: 381- 390).

34). Yet, this belief in the prophetic gifting of White, along with the Adventist claim that her gift marked them as the true church, raised significant concerns for Canright. First, despite White's claims that everything she wrote was divinely inspired, Canright alleged that the leadership of the Adventist organization suppressed some of her early alleged visions (Canright, 1919: 10, Schwarz, 1979: 470).⁸⁵ Second, James White would not allow any questioning of her alleged visions. Canright alleged that the SDA organization considered any questioning of White or her visions as the greatest of all heresies, and meant summary excommunication from the organization, without hearing or trial (Canright, 1919: 203).

Initially, Canright did not investigate or even entertain the doubts he had about White's alleged prophetic gift. SDA leaders told him that any questioning of White led to ruin and was "of the devil." Yet, according to Canright, many SDAs had the same doubts as he and just "went along" with those who accepted her. Canright alleged that one of those who secretly questioned White's prophetic role was the famous SDA pioneer, Uriah Smith (Canright, 1919: 12, 228-230).

Canright saw similarities between the alleged SDA prophet White and both the alleged Mormon prophet Joseph Smith and the Christian Science leader, Mary Baker Eddy (Canright, 1919: 24-28).⁸⁶ Canright questioned why SDAs attributed prophetic status to White yet would not also attribute it to other alleged

⁸⁵ See "Contradictions" section below. Canright claimed that five workers in the General Conference (SDA headquarters) copied hundreds of pages of "suppressed files" from the General Conference vault. These suppressed files contained alleged visions that Ellen White had received that the SDA organization did not want its adherents to read due to the embarrassing content they contained. The GC fired one of the workers, Claude E. Holmes, when he refused to return the copied files (Canright, 1919: 169).

⁸⁶ "Ellen White is to SDAs as Mohammed is to Mohammadans, Smith is to Mormons, Ann Lee is to Shakers, and Mrs. Eddy is to Christian Scientists" (Canright, 1919: 10).

prophetic leaders (Canright, 1919: 30-31). Canright claimed that Seventh-day Adventists were no different from Mormons when they claimed their leader held the status of prophet (Canright, 1919: 17). Both Joseph Smith and Ellen White claimed to receive special revelations from God, and both started new sects based on these alleged revelations. Therefore, for Canright, simply claiming to have a divinely inspired prophet for a leader did not give the SDA organization exclusive rights to remnant status.

As well as having a prophet, the Seventh-day Adventist organization also based its claim to remnant status on the fact that it had grown quickly and had faced persecution. Again, Canright disagreed, saying that the Mormons had grown quicker than SDAs and had faced greater persecution than the SDA organization (including the murder of Joseph Smith [Canright, 1919: 25]).⁸⁷ If size and persecution were indicators of remnant status then according to Canright, the Mormon organization had more right to call itself the remnant church than the SDA organization did.

While much of White's writings dealt with issues of healthy living and temperance, Canright felt that the moral quality of her writing did not prove that she was a prophet. If moral quality of writing was the benchmark against which prophetic writing was tested, Canright felt that the moral quality of Mary Baker

⁸⁷ Canright was uncertain as to exactly what persecution the SDA organization had faced. While critics ridiculed the Millerites for their peculiar beliefs, especially after the disappointment of 1844, there does not seem to be any mention of the Seventh-day Adventist organization facing much persecution, certainly not on the scale that the Mormon organization faced. A few documented cases exist of SDA adherents facing jail time for their refusal to honor the "blue laws" of the late nineteenth century (Schwarz, 1979: 251 – 252), but a few cases of jail time for SDAs hardly compares to the persecution that the Mormons faced.

Eddy's or Ann Lee's teachings far exceeded those of Ellen White (Canright, 1919: 27).⁸⁸

Canright also disagreed with the SDA identification of White as the “spirit of prophecy” (SOP) alluded to in Revelation 12: 17 and identified in Revelation 19: 10.⁸⁹ According to Canright, the SDA organization claimed it was the remnant church of Revelation because of the presence of White in their organization (Canright, 1919: 95, 96). Adventists insisted that White was the SOP and as such, identified the SDA organization as the remnant church (Rice, 1985: 230).⁹⁰ Protestants promoted differing views of the SOP. One view, still held by many churches today, was that the SOP referred to all Christians who believed in Jesus at the end of time (Lindsay, 1997: 243 – 245). Another Christian author suggests that the SOP in Revelation identifies not just Christians who believe in Jesus at the end of time, but specifically those Christians who accept martyrdom for having the SOP, identified in Revelation 19:10 as “the testimony of Jesus” (Jeffrey, 1992: 164 – 165). The more traditional view was that the SOP referred to the Holy Spirit who inspired the writers and prophets of the biblical canon. SDAs argued against all these views by saying that the SOP must

⁸⁸ If moral quality were the benchmark test for prophetic writing, then Adventists would have to attribute prophetic status to a host of writers, including Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, as well as many contemporary Christian authors.

⁸⁹ These two texts must be read together in order to understand how the SDA organization claims that the Bible predicts that the spirit of prophecy identifies the remnant church. Revelation 12: 17 (NIV) “Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring (the SDA organization identifies the offspring as the remnant church) – those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” Revelation 19: 10 (NIV) “At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’”

⁹⁰ Seventh-day Adventist fundamental belief #18 clearly identifies the prophetic gift of Ellen White as the identifying mark of the remnant church. The Adventist organization lists this belief on its official website www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html.

be a living prophet, just as the biblical prophets were living at the time they wrote their contribution to the canon (Canright, 1919: 95-96). Canright argued that even if the SDA view was valid (which he believed it was not), the SDA organization had killed its own argument since Ellen White died in 1915, thereby ending the Adventist claim to remnant status since it no longer had a prophet in its midst (Canright, 1919: 95-97).

Alternate Explanations for Ellen White's Alleged Visions

Canright also questioned the source of Ellen White's alleged visions. White claimed that her visions came from God. In these visions she claimed that she saw and communicated with angelic beings, saw fantastic vistas of otherworldly realms, and received special messages from God for both the SDA organization as a whole, and specific individuals within it. Canright, however, suspected that her visions had a physical and not a spiritual source.

Erikson suggested something similar in *Wayward Puritans* when writing about Anne Hutchinson, a woman who had gathered a following around her and then challenged the authority of the Puritan leaders of the colony. He wrote:

People like Mrs. Hutchinson can be found anywhere, driven to a deep excitement by the urgency of their own convictions. They become leaders of insurrections or prophets of change only when the community around them begins to listen to the words they have been repeating all along, and they are apt to become captives of their own unexpected audience (Erikson, 1966: 106).

Prophets were not always recipients of communications from otherworldly sources. They could be, as Erikson had suggested, given prophetic status based on the approval of the community around them. They also could become caught up in the excitement of their followers and be unable or unwilling to deny the prophetic status their followers conveyed on them for fear of losing their audience.

Sociologist Edwin Lemert continued this line of reasoning when he suggested that an individual in a group might sacrifice certain of his/her personal goals in order to achieve larger goals, and in doing so see the group as a means to an end. The services of others in the group then could become the means whereby the individual could achieve his/her own ends (Lemert, 1964: 63). For a person who needed or sought the approval of those around them, or who had low self esteem, this sudden elevation to prophetic status could prove to be addictive, and the person could become caught up in the “role” the community had assigned to him/her. For a person with low self esteem such as White (as I am about to argue), a prophetic role could have provided the perfect antidote for her feelings of low self worth.

Early in her life, White suffered a severe blow to the head that left her permanently disfigured and incapable of continuing with her education (Numbers, 1992: 1-2; Spalding, 1961: 61). The effect of this accident on her emotional psyche was permanent and severe. Recently, some scholars have argued that her revelations may have been the result of severe psychological disorders brought on by the severity of her early head injury. These disorders include histrionic

disorder, clinical depression, and somatization disorder. By her own admission, she experienced feelings of chronic depression and acute despondency after the accident and often felt as if she did not belong (Canright, 1914: 154-155; Numbers: 1992: 31; Numbers and Numbers, 1992: 212). Canright also suspected that physical and/or emotional deficiencies were the source of Ellen White's visions. He claimed that she suffered from hysterical disorder and ecstasy.⁹¹ Canright also claimed that Ellen White suffered from epilepsy her whole life, an illness (which if true) the SDA organization has never admitted (Canright, 1919: 59).

Given the correlation between the nature and descriptions of her visions and that of certain acute hysterical disorders that Patrick T. Donlon and Don A. Rockwell described in their 1982 book, *Psychiatric Disorders: Diagnosis and Treatment*, it is not surprising that the SDA organization would not admit that Ellen White had any physical ailments that might be the source of her alleged visions. In their description of hysterical psychosis, Donlon and Rockwell wrote that this disorder was "a reaction that often occurs when a person undergoes profoundly distressing events or circumstances" (Donlon and Rockwell, 1982: 43).⁹²

It is possible that a diagnosis of hysterical psychosis might explain White's two initial visions, received not long after her accident, as well as the

⁹¹ For a description of hysterical disorder given from nineteenth century medical textbooks and their correlation to White's condition, see Canright (1919: 171-180, 185-186). Histrionic disorder shares many similarities with acute hysterical disorders.

⁹² Stark and Bainbridge (1997: 129-156) devoted a chapter of their book *Religion, Deviance, and Social Control* to the conflicting views regarding the correlation between religious excitement and cases of insanity and other mental conditions. They concluded that there was no correlation between religion and mental illness.

manifestation of her alleged prophetic visions commencing after the “Great Disappointment” of 1844. Several other characteristics of this disorder seem to support this theory. Donlon and Rockwell wrote:

[Hysterical psychotic reactions] occur much more frequently in young adult females and especially those with hysterical-type personalities. This . . . personality is characterized by excitability, emotional instability, over-reactivity, and self-dramatization, which is always attention seeking and commonly seductive (Donlon and Rockwell, 1982: 43).⁹³

While there is no evidence that Ellen White was ever seductive or used her alleged visions for seductive purposes, she was emotionally unstable (in her own words) and the public nature of her visions always made her the center of attention.⁹⁴

Contradictions and Mistakes in Ellen White’s Alleged Visions and Statements

Canright alleged that Ellen White could not be a prophet since her visions contained contradictions, and that she often passed off her ignorance of historical facts as inspired content. He also felt that she used her visions to support her (and her husband’s) agendas. He based these allegations on contradictions that he observed between individual visions, as well as mistakes between her visions and known facts from history.⁹⁵ Using Matthew 24: 24, and 1 John 4:1 (among

⁹³ Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the Christian Science Church and a contemporary of Ellen White, exhibited similar characteristics (Cather and Milmine, 1992: 21-24).

⁹⁴ See appendix 1 for examples.

⁹⁵ Recent Adventist dissidents, such as Walter Rea, have written extensively on Ellen White’s plagiarism and contradictory nature of her allegedly divinely inspired visions. See Walter Rea’s *The White Lie* (1982).

others), Canright argued that like William Miller, White was also one of the false prophets predicted by Jesus (Canright, 1919: 17).⁹⁶ Because the prophetic status of White was so central to Adventist identity, Canright's questioning of her prophetic status struck at the very heart of Adventist identity. Either she was a true prophet of God, thereby justifying the Adventist claim to a peculiar identity, or she was a fraud, and therefore, called Adventist identity into question.

Sociologist Joseph F. Zygmunt said that a common feature of millenarian groups that had experienced prophetic disconfirmation or non confirmation was to attribute the mistakes in their millenarian prophecies to divine beings, rather than to human misunderstanding. He wrote:

An alternative [explanation] involves the construction of 'explanations' for the acknowledged fact that previously declared prophecies have not been actualized at the time expected. In this instance, specific prophetic disconfirmations are not attributed to the fallibility of human judgment in discerning the unfolding cosmic process, but rather to natural or supernatural agencies which are believed to be responsible for deflecting, retarding, or obstructing the process (Zygmunt, 1972: 261).

In *Early Writings*, White claimed that God hid certain dates from William Miller (by covering them with his hand) when Miller made his famous charts with which he predicted the end of the world and the return of Christ to earth. For Canright, White's claim was equivalent to blaming God for Miller's mistakes (Canright,

⁹⁶ Matthew 24: 24 "For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible." 1 John 4: 1 "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out in the world."

1912: 54 – 56; 1919: 68; White, 1882: 74).⁹⁷ Canright wondered what purpose God could have had for purposely misleading Miller, only to unexplainably give the true message to White and her followers a few years later. The SDA explanation that God had used Miller to purify the organization obviously did not convince him.

Another contradiction raised by White's claim that God misled Miller was that all who rejected Miller's message had rejected God's message for the world. How could a person reject God by rejecting a message that White now claimed held errors that God himself had intended? If an individual rejected Miller's false message, then was it not possible to say that the individual was in harmony with God and not deluded by false prophecy? Yet White claimed that a person had to accept Miller's 1844 message, then believe that the message held error, and finally come to believe that this acceptance of Miller's message was necessary to purify the church. This type of confused reasoning would have caused an extreme case of cognitive dissonance among early SDAs and helps to explain why they were so desperate to reinterpret Miller's prophecies to justify their own contradictory views. A reinterpretation of Miller's prophecy would show that SDAs were in harmony with God and had successfully undergone the purification process God had intended. A belief that they alone had successfully undergone God's intended purification process would also reduce the dissonance brought on

⁹⁷ In *Great Controversy*, White said that long-established errors in the church prevented Miller from arriving at the correct interpretation of the 1844 event. She also said that God used Miller's message to test faith and purify the true church (1888: 351-354). These explanations seem to contradict her earlier statement that God's hand hid the date from Miller and this is what caused his error.

by following Miller in his delusions and then claiming that God had purposefully deluded him.

Other contradictions in *Early Writings* caused Canright to question the validity of White's claims to prophetic guidance. Ellen White wrote that "the same Herod who condemned Jesus also put [the disciple] James to death." This was false. Later editors of Ellen White's writings added a note acknowledging a different Herod (Herod Antipas) had condemned James, and that Herod Agrippa had condemned Jesus. In an attempt to salvage White's reputation, change her mistake, and preserve her claim to divine revelation, the publishers also said that the "Herodian" spirit was in both of them, thereby hoping to justify White's mistake. Did God inspire her? Did God not know the difference between the two Herods? For Canright, the answer was that White was not inspired, and that she passed off her own ideas and ignorance as inspired testimony from God (Canright, 1919: 223, 224; White, 1882: 185).

In 1882, The SDA organization published White's book, *Early Writings*, claiming it was an exact copy of all her early visions and writings. Having intimate knowledge of White's early alleged visions and writings; Canright disagreed with this statement, since he claimed to know of many differences between the "official" publication *Early Writings* and White's earliest alleged visions, published in 1847 in the booklet *A Word to the Little Flock* (Canright, 1919: 148, 149). The alleged visions contained in the *Little Flock* publication referred to the conscious state of dead patriarchs such as Noah, Jacob, Daniel, Abraham, and Isaac, whom White claimed to have met and spoken with in one of

her alleged visions. A problem now existed however between the 1882 publication and the 1847 publication.

When James White published his wife's first visions in *Little Flock* in 1847, Ellen still believed in the immortality of the soul after death, thereby enabling her to claim that she had met Noah, Jacob, and others while in vision. By 1882, however, Ellen White had endorsed the idea of soul sleep,⁹⁸ which meant that she could not have seen the souls of Noah, Jacob, Abraham, or Isaac in heaven as she had claimed in the 1847 publication. The SDA organization therefore deleted the lines referring to all of the dead Patriarchs she claimed to have met in vision except Enoch (whom most Christians believe went to heaven without dying) in the official 1882 publication of *Early Writings* (Canright, 1919: 146-150; White, 1882: 40). Once again, White and the SDA organization deliberately altered the content of White's allegedly divine visions in order to meet with newer beliefs and preserve her reputation.

In *Testimonies Volume 3*, Ellen White claimed, "God has been pleased to open the secrets of the inner life of and the hidden sins of his people. The unpleasant duty has been laid upon me to reprove wrongs and reveal hidden sins" (White, 1885c: 314). Canright questioned this claim since Ellen White had been unaware that a leading SDA minister, Elder Fuller, was committing adultery with several women in his congregation. Ellen White and her husband had visited Fuller's church and stayed in his home during the time that the alleged affairs

⁹⁸ Soul sleep is the belief that upon death, a person's soul sleeps in the ground until the resurrection. While most Christians teach that upon death a person's soul returns to God, SDAs believe that the dead are in an unconscious state in the ground until the second coming of Christ and the end of time. SDA fundamental belief #26 states this belief.

were occurring, yet White did not suspect the adultery. Canright felt this lack of knowledge regarding the minister's alleged affairs proved that Ellen White was a liar when she claimed that God showed her people's secret sins so that she could reveal them and save the organization from harm (Canright, 1919: 247). Her claim to intimate knowledge of people's hidden sins contradicted the fact that she often did not know people's hidden sins, something that Canright had experienced in his own dealings with White.⁹⁹

One final example of White's contradictions was her usage of alleged visions to manipulate people. In his book, *The Great Second Advent Movement* (1905), SDA pioneer and friend of Ellen and James White, J. N. Loughborough, related how Ellen White convinced Joseph Bates to join the SDA organization. White claimed to have had a vision regarding the solar system, a topic that Bates, a sea captain, loved and had often talked about in his conversations with James White. Ellen White claimed that in her vision God had shown her a planet with four moons, which Joseph Bates identified as Jupiter. Next, she claimed to have seen a planet with rings, belts, and eight moons, which Joseph Bates identified as Saturn. Then, she saw a third planet with six moons, which Bates identified as Uranus. Joseph Bates had described all of these planets and their moons to James White earlier in their friendship but was amazed at how Ellen White, a woman with no knowledge of the solar system, could have had such intimate knowledge of it. Obviously Bates did not consider the possibility that James White might

⁹⁹ As mentioned earlier, Canright had decided to leave the SDA organization when the Ohio conference, under the direct guidance of Ellen White, reelected him for another term. White claimed that God revealed to her that Canright was "the right man for the job" even though Canright claimed to have protested the appointment.

have relayed their conversation to Ellen White, who then use the information to “fake” a vision.

Based on her vision, Bates became convinced of her prophetic gift and joined the SDA organization. Within a few years of this alleged vision, scientists discovered that Jupiter had nine moons, Saturn had ten moons, and Uranus had four moons. Ellen White, however, claimed that God had shown her these planets and their moons exactly as she described them to Bates. After describing the alleged vision and its aftermath, Loughborough, in his book, admitted that scientists had discovered more moons since White’s alleged vision (in Canright, 1919: 276-280; Loughborough, 1905: 258).

For Canright, Ellen White’s mistaken identification of the planets meant that either she had faked the vision in which she related things she had overheard Bates speaking of at an earlier date or received via her husband in an attempt to get him to believe in her prophetic role, or God had given her incorrect information in her “vision” that she then relayed to Bates in order to convince him to join the organization. Either way, the vision had contained false information. Too many mistakes and contradictions appeared in White’s alleged visions for Canright to accept either her prophetic claims or the organization that based its identity and theology on them.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Religion professor and director of the Institute for the Study of American Religion, J. Gordon Melton, suggested that several main ideas were involved in the psychopathological model of cult development. These ideas may help to explain the formation of Adventist identity based on White’s alleged visions. First, Melton said that cults are a novel cultural response to times of personal and societal crisis. Second, people with certain types of mental illness invent new cults. Third, these individuals typically achieve their novel visions during psychotic episodes. Fourth, during these episodes the individual invents a new package of compensators to meet his/her own needs. Fifth, the individual’s illness commits him/her to the new vision, either because his/her hallucinations appear to demonstrate its truth or because compelling needs demand immediate

The Lord's Day, from Neither Catholics or Pagans

The SDA organization places a special emphasis on Saturday observance. As demonstrated earlier, SDAs see Saturday observance (which they call Sabbath observance) as a central issue in the judgment currently taking place in heaven. Canright disagreed with the SDA focus on Saturday observance and the special significance that the SDA organization attached to it. In *The Lord's Day*, Canright also challenged the SDA claim that Sunday observance had infiltrated the Protestant world through the combined efforts of Catholics and Pagans.

Ellen White alleged that every member of the 144,000 Sabbath-keeping remnant organization would occupy a special place in heaven as Christ's bodyguards. She also claimed that in one vision an angel told her that they (the 144,000) would have the privilege of visiting other worlds (presumably, no-one else would get to visit them [in Canright, 1915: 49; White, 1882: 40]). This belief meant that SDAs would have a special place in heaven because of their observance of the Saturday Sabbath. It is unclear if Canright saw this idea of SDAs having a special place in heaven as a contradiction of the implied SDA belief that God saved only those who kept the Sabbath (as mentioned earlier) since it is possible to see this statement of White's indicating other non-Sabbath keeping people in heaven (in a less honored position). What is clear from White's vision is that SDAs believed that Sabbath observance gave them a special status in

satisfaction. Sixth, after the episode, the individual will be most likely to succeed in forming a cult around his vision if the society contains many other persons suffering from problems similar to those originally faced by the cult founder, to whose solution, therefore, they are likely to respond. Seven, cults most often succeed during times of societal crisis, when large numbers of persons suffer from similar unresolved problems. Eight, if the cult does succeed in attracting many followers, the individual founder may achieve at least a partial cure of his/her illness because the self-generated compensators are legitimated by other persons and because the founder now receives true rewards from his/her followers (Melton, 1987: 173, 174).

heaven; therefore, they defended its sanctity on earth and insisted that all Christians were under obligation to observe it.

In the January 7, 1915 edition of the SDA periodical, *Advent Review*, a lengthy editorial argued that there would be a world-wide confederacy of all nations (against Seventh-day Adventists and Saturday keeping) headed by the President of the United States of America (Canright, 1915: 55).¹⁰¹ Briefly, this conspiracy included the United States, the Roman Catholic Church, and all Protestant Churches that worshipped on Sunday. In vision, Ellen White claimed that God had shown her how the Catholic Church instituted Sunday as the day of worship in direct violation of the fourth Commandment.¹⁰² White claimed that the conspiracy to persecute Seventh-day Adventists was an attempt by the United States and the Protestant Churches to enforce obedience to the Roman Catholic Church rather than to God (White, 1888: 451-460).

Canright disagreed with SDAs who said that the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope changed the holy day from Saturday to Sunday. He claimed, as did the Roman Catholic Church, that the first apostles changed the day of worship in honor of their risen leader (Canright, 1915: 87-89).¹⁰³ Canright also argued that if the Roman Catholic Church had changed the day of worship, then many great

¹⁰¹ See previous section for details of this alleged conspiracy in the discussion of Canright's book, *Adventism Renounced*.

¹⁰² "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20: 8-11 NIV).

¹⁰³ One proof that Canright used was from The Gospel of Barnabas chapter 15, written around 120 [CE]. In it, the author wrote "we (believers) keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day, also, on which Jesus rose from the dead" (in Canright, 1915: 131). Since a week has only seven days, the author is obviously referring to the first day of the next week, Sunday.

reformers such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and even William Miller must have received the “mark of the beast,” yet SDA theology firmly stated that the “mark of the beast” had not yet happened and that those who honestly worshiped on Sunday without knowledge of the true day of worship had not received the mark (White, 1888: 449). Canright wondered how it was that Adventists could argue that the “mark of the beast” would not begin until almost 1600 years (or more) after the beginning of official Sunday worship.¹⁰⁴

Dudley M. Canright presented the most comprehensive dissenting voice against Adventist identity during its early years. He dissented against Adventist identity, theology, and the role of Ellen White. Other dissenters, such as Ellet J. Waggoner and Alonzo T. Jones dissented against more specific boundaries of Adventist identity as well as the organizational structure of the church.¹⁰⁵

Ellet J. Waggoner (1855-1916) and Alonzo T. Jones (1850-1923)

Until the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Session of 1888, in Minneapolis, Ellet J. Waggoner and Alonzo T. Jones were both well-respected ministers in the Seventh-day Adventist organization. Both men had achieved enough trust within the SDA organization that in 1885, it had elected them as co-editors of the largest SDA periodical of the time, *Signs of the Times* (Neufeld, 1996: 832).

¹⁰⁴ In *Great Controversy*, Ellen White wrote that the mark of the beast would not happen until the United States government united with apostate Protestant churches to enforce Sunday worship and to punish any who dissented against that enforcement (White, 1888: 449). Therefore, for SDAs, the mark of the beast would not happen without government enforcement and penalties against those who did not comply with that enforcement.

¹⁰⁵ In Chapter Three, I discuss the SDA organization’s response to its dissenters, showing how that response demonstrates the validity of Durkheim and Erikson’s theories regarding the role of dissent in the construction of group identity.

Alonzo T. Jones was a popular figure among SDAs, being the first SDA to testify before the United States Senate against the Blair Sunday Bill as well as the author of several well-received books (Knight, 1987: 48, 77).¹⁰⁶ Waggoner began his career in the SDA organization as a doctor at Battle Creek Sanitarium,¹⁰⁷ but in 1884 he left the medical profession to pursue ministry and worked at Pacific Press Publishing (a well respected SDA publishing association) before he joined Jones at *Signs* (Neufeld, 1996: 848).

At the 1888 meetings, SDA leaders had asked Waggoner and Jones to give a series of lectures to its ministers. In this series of lectures, Waggoner and Jones challenged the SDA belief that God required Christians to observe the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament.¹⁰⁸ Prior to 1888, on the advice of Ellen White, Waggoner had been studying the canonical books of Romans and Galatians and had discovered the concept of “righteousness by faith.” Stated briefly, righteousness by faith is the belief that God saves a person based on that person’s faith in Jesus, not on their ability to properly observe the tenets of the law. At the 1888 meetings, Waggoner and Jones taught that the SDA church wrongly emphasized the place and role of the “law” (Land, 2005: 153, 314).

Seventh-day Adventists taught the continued validity of the Ten Commandments and the duty that all Christians had to observe them in order to

¹⁰⁶ In 1896, Jones wrote *Empires of the Bible*. In 1898, he wrote *Great Empires of Prophecy* and in 1901, he wrote *Ecclesiastical Empires* (Knight, 1987: 162).

¹⁰⁷ Kellogg added the word ‘sanitarium’ to the English dictionary and re-named the Western Health Reform Institute using the word ‘sanitarium’ instead of the more common ‘sanatorium’ meaning a place for sick people (Willis, 2003: 13).

¹⁰⁸ This challenge to Adventist identity influenced Canright, and his arguments against the Adventist interpretation of the law in the New Testament, as well as his disbelief in Ellen White’s teachings (discussed earlier) owed much to Waggoner and Jones (Canright, 1919: 96, 97).

justify their belief in Sabbath observance.¹⁰⁹ Waggoner and Jones promoted the belief that the law Paul referred to in Galatians 3 was the entire law, including the Ten Commandments (Schwarz, 1979: 185-187).¹¹⁰ The SDA organization considered Waggoner's and Jones's position very damaging to SDA identity since the SDA organization felt that Waggoner's and Jones's interpretation of the Galatians text undermined Sabbath observance (Knight, 1987: 24; Land, 2005: 314). If the SDA organization could not prove that Christians, after the death of Christ, were still under obligation to observe what they had termed the "moral law" (Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20), then the SDA organization no longer had a reason for demanding that adherents observe the Sabbath. Since the SDA organization tied so many of its other beliefs to Sabbath observance, SDA leaders found it crucial to defend observance of the "moral law."¹¹¹

The dispute between Waggoner and Jones and the SDA organization over the role of the law highlighted Erikson's observation that societies (or organizations) were boundary-maintaining, and that when dissenters challenged those boundaries, organizational leaders viewed the dissenter's actions as deviant and responded accordingly. The organizational response usually took the form of persons chosen by its leaders to defend the group's morality against the dissenter (Erikson, 1966: 10, 13). The leaders of the SDA organization saw Waggoner and

¹⁰⁹ SDA theology sees a distinction between the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, and the moral law of the Ten Commandments, also found in the Old Testament. SDA theologians taught that when Christ died on the cross, he did away with the requirements of the ceremonial law but not the moral law. Since the moral law includes the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy, SDAs taught that Sabbath observance was necessary in order to keep the moral law.

¹¹⁰ Paul wrote in Galatians 3 that anyone who attempts to attain salvation through keeping the law is cursed.

¹¹¹ In chapter one I showed how SDAs allege that Sabbath observance is one mark of the remnant church and is the central issue in the investigative judgment.

Jones's challenge as potentially damaging to SDA identity, and the leaders themselves comprised the group that defended SDA boundaries against this attack.

Organizational leaders turned to Ellen White for guidance regarding the challenges that Waggoner and Jones had brought against SDA identity. Curiously, she remained silent at first, while actively supporting their continued ministry. For almost a year after the Minneapolis conference, White travelled around the country with Waggoner and Jones, helping to promote their views on righteousness by faith (Knight, 1987: 46, 226; Neufeld, 1996: 832, Schwarz, 1979: 186, 192). Finally, in 1896, White ended her silence and stated that the law referred to in Galatians was the moral law and included the Ten Commandments. An Adventist compilation entitled *Selected Messages* (1945) claimed that White made many public and published statements regarding her view that the "law" of Galatians included the Ten Commandments (Trustees of the Ellen White Estate, 1945: 233, 234). While this seemed to vindicate Waggoner and Jones and their assertion that law-keeping was not necessary for salvation, it troubled many SDAs who could point to other writings by White where she seemed to promote a view of law-keeping known as perfectionism. Many SDAs had begun to promote this concept of "perfectionism" (living without sinning) as the result of the organization's focus on observance of the law (specifically the Sabbath), based on White's writings.

While not all SDAs were actively engaged in promoting a perfectionist lifestyle, it is not surprising that many did, given the fanaticism out of which the

organization sprang. Robert K. Merton wrote that religious fanaticism was a form of deviance known as “over-conformity” to institutional (in this case religious) norms. Merton said that the perfectionist who adhered even to the minutiae of rules that the group considered unnecessary was an example of a religious fanatic or deviant (Merton, 1959: 184). SDAs who actively tried to follow every council given by Ellen White or who focused obsessively on keeping the Commandments (especially the fourth) in order to achieve salvation were practicing over-conformity to institutional norms.

Merton further stated that a group did not consider high performance to be deviant behavior as long as it did not interfere with the smooth functioning of the group, meaning the high performer did not demand the same level of conformity from other members (Merton, 1959: 184). In the case of the SDA organization, however, there is evidence that the leaders of the organization were “high performers,” especially since the prophetess of the group provided the revelations and visions that sparked the perfectionist or high-performance lifestyle among adherents.

Those within the SDA organization who promoted perfectionism often cited Ellen White’s own writings as the source of their perfectionist agenda. She had written on the subject often, and dissidents who wanted to prove that Ellen White was the source of “high-performance” living, found ample evidence of her allegedly divinely inspired writings concerning God’s demand for perfect living. She wrote:

Christ lived a life of perfect obedience to God's law, and in this He set an example for every human being. Nothing less than perfect obedience can meet the standard of God's requirement (White, 1909: 180).

She also wrote:

God calls upon us to reach the standard of perfection, and places before us the example of Christ's character (White, 1911: 531).

And finally:

The tempter's [Satan] voice will be heard on every side, telling you that you are not now required to keep the law of God. This is a device of Satan. God has a law and men must keep it. The happiness of man is found in obedience to the laws of God. When we bring our lives to complete obedience to the law of God . . . God will work in our behalf (Trustees of the Ellen White Publications, 1955: 66).

Despite these and other writings, Ellen White also actively supported Waggoner and Jones in their attack on perfectionism and their promotion of salvation through faith, thus doing away with the need for perfect living as a prerequisite for salvation. Her support of Waggoner and Jones caused a split within the SDA organization and angered many of the leaders of the organization who continued to officially defend the SDA belief in perfectionism (Neufeld, 2005: 314, Schwarz, 1079: 191-193).

Waggoner soon left the United States for England to become the editor of a European SDA magazine but Jones continued to be involved actively in the life of the organization in the United States. In 1889, he helped establish the General

Conference Executive Committee. The purpose of this committee was to take control of the SDA organization out of the hands of one man, the General Conference President, and put it under the direction of a committee of men. When the head of that committee, A. G. Daniels, began to refer to himself as the General Conference President and soon reinstated the office (with himself as president), Jones resigned from the General Conference Executive Committee and became a more vocal opponent of hierarchical organization (Land, 2005: 154; Neufeld, 1996: 832; Schwarz, 1979: 471).

Despite Jones's opposition to organizational structure, in 1901 he accepted the organization's offer to become president of the California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Neufeld, 1996: 832, 833). He held this position for almost three years, but he resigned in 1903 after Ellen White and other leaders accused him of "inappropriate" relationships with female workers (Knight, 1987: 203, 204). Although the charges were never substantiated and the organization took no disciplinary action against him, his resignation from the conference, as well as probable hard feelings towards SDA leaders, led him to take a new direction in his life in 1903. Against the advice of White, Jones accepted Dr. John Harvey Kellogg's invitation to teach at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, a decision that brought him directly into the conflict, already brewing, between Kellogg and the Seventh-day Adventist organization (Schwarz, 1979: 472).

Alonzo T. Jones and John Harvey Kellogg had several dissenting opinions in common. The main thrust, however, of Jones's dissent dealt with theological differences with the SDA organization over the role of the "law," and both shared

a distrust of organizational control. During his years at Battle Creek Sanitarium, Jones began to challenge the SDA belief in the prophetic claims of Ellen White.¹¹² Jones believed that the leadership of the organization manipulated White's testimonies to serve their own purposes (Schwarz, 1979: 472). While Kellogg shared these feelings with Jones (as we will see in the next section), distrust of organizational control most closely allied Jones and Kellogg. John Harvey Kellogg's challenge to SDA identity is the final example of dissent from the SDA organization that I discuss. Kellogg came into conflict with the organization over its basis of authority, its right to exercise control over its adherents and institutions, and finally over his promotion of pantheism.

John Harvey Kellogg

John Harvey Kellogg's family converted to Adventism six months after John Harvey was born. John Harvey was one of sixteen children and he showed an early interest in chemistry (Neufeld, 1996: 851; Schwarz, 1995: 12-16; Willis, 2003: 11, 12). With the encouragement of James and Ellen White, he studied medicine; and after receiving his MD¹¹³ the SDA organization appointed him head of the Western Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek Michigan, the largest SDA medical center at the time in 1876 (Neufeld, 1996: 851; Willis, 2003: 29). Kellogg was raised in a SDA home, knew James and Ellen White personally, allegedly was very bright, and during his early years was completely devoted to

¹¹² On December 25, 1905, Jones gave a six-hour talk to the department heads of the Battle Creek Sanitarium in which he stated that God had not inspired all of White's writings (Knight, 1987: 219, 220). In response, Ellen White accused Jones of listening to his own counsel above the counsel that God gave her to give to him (Schwarz, 1979: 472).

¹¹³ Kellogg studied medicine at the College of Medicine and Surgery of the University of Michigan and graduated with his MD from the Bellevue Hospital Medical School in New York in 1875 (Numbers, 1992: 124).

the SDA organization and its leaders. He was perhaps, the most unlikely of dissidents.

Much like Canright, Kellogg initially had a good relationship with James and Ellen White. Kellogg found within the SDA organization's beliefs a "systematic and harmonious body of hygienic truths . . . consistent with the bible" (Willis, 2003: 9). This "body of hygienic truth" gave Kellogg all the evidence he needed to see the connection between Ellen White's prophetic visions concerning health, the SDA organization's concern with healthful living, and his own convictions on the issue.¹¹⁴ He allowed Ellen White to guide his health reform work through her visions, and in his early writings, John Harvey Kellogg credited her with many of the health reform ideas that he championed (Neufeld, 1996: 852; Willis, 2003: 29-31).¹¹⁵

This early friendship between Kellogg and White did not last. Several incidents prompted Kellogg to question the methods and integrity of the SDA organization and its leaders, including White herself. First, Kellogg began to question White's prophetic gift.¹¹⁶ Two different alleged visions White received regarding the Western Health Reform Institute (by this time known as Battle Creek Sanitarium) strengthened Kellogg's doubts regarding her. Kellogg wanted

¹¹⁴ SDA fundamental belief #22 deals with healthful living and includes prohibitions against alcohol, tobacco, and unclean meats identified in the Old Testament. Adventist fundamental beliefs are available on the organization's official website, www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html. See also Ronald Numbers' *Prophets of Health* (1992), and Eugen Weber's *Apocalypses* (1999: 178).

¹¹⁵ Kellogg wrote the introduction to Ellen White's book, *Christian Temperance* (Willis, 2003: 29 – 31).

¹¹⁶ Kellogg was not the only person at Battle Creek Sanitarium to lose faith in White's prophetic claims. Doctors at Battle Creek Sanitarium often treated White for her numerous and frequent illness. Several of the best doctors, including Kellogg, renounced their faith in "divine inspiration" as the source of her visions after studying her case for years. They attributed her visions to a weakened mental and physical condition (Canright, 1919: 181, 182).

to expand the Sanitarium and he asked White what she thought about his expansion plans. White told Kellogg that God had shown her in a vision that Kellogg should proceed with the plans and that God had authorized those plans. After construction had begun on the expansion, James White returned from a trip and ordered the workers to stop construction because the expansion plans did not meet with his approval. Next, he ordered all the construction work torn down.

Soon after, White alleged that she had received a new vision regarding the Sanitarium. After this new vision she admitted she had lied about the first vision (even though she had initially claimed her first vision was from God). She then instructed the construction workers to tear down the half-built sanitarium and rebuild it (in conformity to James White's wishes [Canright, 1919: 77-79]).¹¹⁷

Kellogg saw this as proof that her "visions" were not from God since her husband could manipulate her to change the messages contained in the alleged vision to suit his own personal agenda.

The second reason Kellogg began to question the integrity of the organization was because its leadership continuously attempted to undermine his authority and take control of Battle Creek Sanitarium (Schwarz, 1979: 283; 1995: 63). Under Kellogg's leadership, the Sanitarium became the leading health institute in the United States, and many leading politicians as well as foreign dignitaries were patients (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 10; Fromm, 1971: 349). The SDA leadership, however, felt that Kellogg was too independent, prompting a battle for control of the Sanitarium between Kellogg and the leaders of the SDA

¹¹⁷ SDA sources do not make mention of this incident but Ronald Numbers suggests that this incident did take place; ten years before Kellogg took control of the institution (Numbers, 1992: 111-115, 124).

organization. SDA historian Richard Schwarz claims that control of financial profits, which were very high at the time, stood at the heart of the conflict (1995: 176). Although SDA historians like Schwarz claim that financial profits were the driving force behind the battle over the Battle Creek Sanitarium, it appears as if the deeper issue for Kellogg was one of control. Was Kellogg free to run the Sanitarium as he saw fit or would he allow the leadership of the SDA organization to dictate the policies of the medical institute? The SDA organization, especially in its early years (as seen in the previous chapter), tended to be highly controlling of adherents, especially ministers, in order to establish orthodoxy, and the organization saw no difference between Kellogg's work and that of their ministers. Therefore, the SDA organization felt it had a right to expect the same conformity and submission to authority from Kellogg that it expected from its ministers.

The first thing Kellogg did to limit the amount of control that the SDA organization exercised at Battle Creek Sanitarium was to reorganize it in such a way that he had legal control, something he accomplished at the end of the nineteenth century (Schwarz, 1995: 67-69). With SDA control limited, Kellogg was free to run the institution as he saw fit, including putting the advancement of medical work ahead of that of religious work. Kellogg ran the Battle Creek Sanitarium on a non-sectarian basis, using many of the latest medical techniques and the sanitarium supplied many religious organizations with medical missionaries since Kellogg advocated medical missionary work above religious missionary work (Willis, 2003: 10 – 13). No doubt, Kellogg's running of the

Sanitarium on a non-sectarian basis made SDA leaders uneasy since they considered Battle Creek Sanitarium to be primarily an SDA institution (Schwarz, 1979: 284). Therefore, in 1903, the General Conference session enacted a resolution requiring that all institutions (including Battle Creek Sanitarium) come under organizational control. A. G. Daniels, who was the new President of the SDA organization, was determined to establish ministerial control over all institutions and Kellogg resisted that control (Land, 2005: 158; Schwarz, 1995: 182).¹¹⁸

Kellogg did not want doctors working under the direction of ministers. Kellogg felt that ministers were uneducated and had no business in a medical establishment. SDA historians suggest that Kellogg tended to look down on ministers because they lacked his level of education, and he accused SDA leaders of luring the brightest young people into ministry instead of medical work. Seventh-day Adventist leaders accused him of trying to lure the brightest young people into the medical work instead of ministry, which the organization saw as its primary focus (Schwartz, 1995: 175-181).

Kellogg's battle with the SDA organization highlights one of Durkheim's observations regarding dissent and social formation. As I showed earlier, Durkheim said that social organization was impossible unless society demanded the cooperation of the individuals who made up that society. Durkheim went on to say that society required individuals to put its interests above their own

¹¹⁸ Later SDA historians have attempted to view Kellogg's battle with SDA leadership as a battle over control of the entire SDA organization (Schwarz, 1995: 181-188). Little evidence supports such a claim, although if such a claim were true, then it would justify the organizational actions against Kellogg and allow the organization to see the loss of one of history's most innovative physicians as necessary in order to maintain its identity and integrity.

(Durkheim, 1912: 209-210). SDA leaders expected Kellogg to follow their mandates regarding the operation of the Sanitarium, mandates which Kellogg felt were not in the best interest of the Sanitarium, and therefore not in his best interest. Kellogg wanted the Sanitarium to be the premiere medical facility of its time while the SDA organization wanted it to be the finest SDA medical facility of its time.

Soon, Ellen White entered the conflict and said that Kellogg was under the influence of the devil. She relayed this information to Jones who in 1903 had accepted Kellogg's offer to join the staff at Battle Creek College (Canright, 1919: 223; Knight, 1987: 209). As she had done with other SDA leaders who disagreed with her, White pointed out what she considered to be flaws in the Kellogg's character and policies (Schwarz, 1979: 285). Kellogg did not appreciate White pointing out what she considered to be his faults, and as a result he began to publically question her prophetic status. With both Kellogg and Jones questioning White's prophetic gift and the ongoing battle between Kellogg and the organization over control of the Sanitarium, many SDAs believed that Battle Creek was a dangerous place for SDA neophytes. Seventh-day Adventists believed Kellogg's (and Jones's) negative influence would cause young SDAs to lose faith in White and the authority of the SDA organization (Schwarz, 1995: 184). Not only did both men openly challenge the authority of SDA leaders as well as their alleged prophet, but in his book, *The Living Temple*, Kellogg had begun promoting ideas that the organization considered pantheistic, and therefore unsuitable for anyone who claimed to be monotheistic, as SDAs did.

Kellogg initially wrote *The Living Temple* to raise money to rebuild the Sanitarium after it mysteriously burnt down in 1902. Kellogg had planned to rebuild the Sanitarium on an even larger scale than before the fire. Seventh-day Adventist leaders refused to go along with Kellogg's plans for a larger Sanitarium since they felt that the Sanitarium was already too large. They also did not trust Kellogg since he did not follow Ellen White's council. When Kellogg attempted to sell bonds to raise funds to build the new, larger sanitarium, White instructed SDAs not to buy them because the SDA organization might need adherents' money for other reasons, although she did not specify what those reasons might be (Schwarz, 1979: 287-288; Schwarz, 1995: 180).

In *The Living Temple*, Kellogg wrote that God was literally in every tree, every flower, and every cell of the brain, ideas that SDA leaders interpreted as pantheistic. SDA leadership reacted strongly to this line of thinking and attempted to get Kellogg to see what they considered to be the error of his ways. When Kellogg refused to recant, the Review and Herald Publishing Association, which was the largest SDA publishing company, refused to publish *The Living Temple* because of what it considered to be "abhorrent" theology (Land, 2005: 158; Neufeld, 1996: 852; Schwarz, 1995: 71, 184, 185).¹¹⁹

Over time, Kellogg grew to distrust not only SDA theology, but also the entire leadership of the SDA organization. He felt as though all SDA medical work should be strictly under his control and that ministers and bureaucrats

¹¹⁹ Kellogg claimed he had taught these same beliefs at three general conference sessions without incurring any criticism, and he maintained they were the same as what Ellen White had written in *Education* in a chapter entitled "God in Nature" (Schwarz, 1979: 293; Schwarz, 1995: 185).

should not interfere with it. Sociologist Edwin Lemert said that social controls are a “cause,” rather than an effect of deviant behavior (Lemert, 1964: 83) and the battle between Kellogg and the SDA organization over control of the Sanitarium provides proof of the truth of Lemert’s observation. When SDA leaders moved to take control of the medical work, Kellogg reacted against them, setting off a chain of events that put Kellogg and the SDA organization at odds. It is conceivable that if the SDA organization had not attempted to enforce its authority over Kellogg and take control of the Sanitarium, Kellogg may have never become a dissenter. In the final analysis, the determining factor in Kellogg’s dissent was the issue of control. For Kellogg the issue was one of freedom from organizational control, while for the SDA organization, the issue was one of maintaining control over its adherents and institutions.

As the Seventh-day Adventist organization faced dissenting opinions from Canright, Jones, Waggoner, and Kellogg, all of whom challenged SDA identity, the SDA leadership took action against these dissenters in order to strengthen its unique identity and maintain its boundaries. The SDA response to these early dissenters and the reasons for that response comprise the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Dissent and the Reintroduction of Cognitive Dissonance

According to sociologist Howard Becker, deviance is a consequence of the application of rules and sanctions to an “offender.” In *Outsiders*, Becker wrote:

The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label. Deviance is not a simple quality, present in some kinds of behaviours and absent in others. It is the product of a process [that] involves responses of other people to the behaviour (Becker, 1963: 9-14).

The actions and opinions that dissenters voiced against SDA identity were deviant only in the opinion of the SDA organization.¹²⁰ Therefore, the organization labeled dissenters as deviants in order to secure its own identity. It completed this activity through the careful demarcation of actions and opinions that it considered deviant from those it considered acceptable. It would be unfair (and untrue) to paint the Adventist organization as a monolithic and unmovable object, incapable of flexibility and change if it found some validity in the opinion of the dissenter. That said, the SDA organization never promoted or encouraged dissenting opinions or did nothing when dissenters arose. Dissenters provoked the SDA organization to react against their ideas in order to protect and reaffirm its distinctive identity.

In the case of each dissenter I studied, a period of attempted reconciliation between the SDA organization and the dissenter(s) came before actions on the

¹²⁰ Durkheim said much the same thing when he wrote:

Imagine a society of saints, a perfect cloister of exemplary individuals. Crimes, properly so called, will there be unknown; but faults which appear venial to the layman will create there the same scandal that the ordinary offense does in ordinary consciousnesses (Durkheim, 1895: 68-69).

part of one or both parties to solidify their position. Finally, the organization and the dissenters ended their mutual affiliation in one of two ways: first, through the dissenter withdrawing his/her membership from the organization, or second, through the organization removing the dissenter's membership in the organization. Although the removal of the dissenter from the ranks of the SDA organization ended one aspect of the association between the two, the SDA organization still had to deal with the challenge to its identity voiced by the dissenter(s). In the case of Canright, the official SDA organization firmly rejected the challenges he posed to its identity, as they also did with Kellogg. The situation with Waggoner and Jones differed significantly. In the case of Waggoner and Jones, the organization had to deal with the fact that White supported the initial dissenting opinions they raised in 1888. The organizational responses to Canright, Waggoner and Jones, and Kellogg comprise the first section of this chapter.

Seventh-day Adventist Response to Dissidents

Sociologist Robert K. Merton wrote that group responses to deviant behaviour included formal and informal negative sanctions as well as social procedures such as ostracism, ridicule, and accommodation (Merton, 1959: 185-186). Earlier, Durkheim had said that society's punishment of deviants was necessary in order for the group to re-affirm its shared convictions (Durkheim, 1912: 209-210). As the SDA organization responded to Canright, Waggoner and Jones, and Kellogg, it used a variety of responses, beginning with informal negative sanctions and ending with separation. The excommunication of these

dissidents and the rejection of their ideas were necessary in order for the leaders of the SDA organization to re-affirm shared beliefs and strengthen group cohesiveness. As I show, however, in the case of Waggoner and Jones, the organization did accommodate itself to include part of their dissenting opinions while still ostracizing both of them.

While eventually the SDA organization severed ties with the dissenters, it first attempted to get the dissenter(s) to conform to organizational standards. As I have shown, Ellen White and the leadership of the organization continued to have dialogue with the dissenters throughout the period of time in which the dissenters challenged the organization. Festinger said, “In situations where dissonance results from an individual dissenting from the opinion of the social group, there is a strong pressure exerted on the individual by the group to conform” (Festinger, 1957: 182). When attempts to conform the dissenting individual(s) failed, the SDA organization and the dissenter dissolved whatever formal connections they had.

Organizational Response to Canright

It is unclear why Dudley M. Canright finally left the SDA organization. Speculation from one SDA source suggests he left because the Michigan Conference did not elect him to the presidency. Canright claimed he left because he no longer believed fundamental SDA doctrines (Schwartz, 1979: 468, 469). What is clear, however, is that initially Canright voluntarily chose to leave the Seventh-day Adventist organization after a long career in the ministry.¹²¹ In

¹²¹ Canright did not reach this decision lightly. He wrote:

1887, under the direction of the President of the SDA organization, Canright's home church dropped both his and his wife's name from its membership. Later that same year, Canright accepted a position as pastor of the Ostega, Michigan Baptist church, a position he held for several years (Neufeld, 1996: 285; Schwarz, 1979: 467-469).

SDA historian R. W. Schwarz documents Canright's contentious history with the Adventist organization (Schwarz, 1979: 464-469), yet it appears that Canright expressed his most vocal dissent towards the organization after he left. Therefore, the SDA response to Canright's dissenting opinions took the form of organizationally authored books and articles that attacked him and his opinions.¹²² The SDA organization also circulated rumors that in private conversations with unnamed Adventists, Canright had recanted his dissident views, had repented of his errors, felt that he was lost for rejecting the doctrines of the SDA organization, and still wished to be a part of the organization. These unnamed sources also claimed that Canright urged them never to give up the truth of the SDA message (Schwarz, 1979: 470).

[Leaving Adventism] cost me a terrible struggle and a great sacrifice, for in doing it I had to leave all my life-long friends, the cherished hopes of my youth, the whole work of my life, all the means of my support, every honorable position I held, and bring upon myself reproach, hatred, and persecution. I had to begin life anew, among strangers, with untried methods, uncertain where to go or what to do. No one who has not tried it can ever begin to realize the fearful struggle it requires. It is the dread of all this which holds many with them who are yet dissatisfied where they are (Canright, 1914: 55).

¹²² The SDA organization compared Canright to Baalam, Kora, Dathan and Abiram (biblical dissidents against Moses), to Judas, and a whole list of evil characters. SDAs circulated false reports about Canright throughout the organization and Ellen White devoted several articles to Canright's evil ways (Canright, 1914: 55 – 56, Schwarz, 1979: 469). Not until 1933, did an SDA author write a full length-book refuting Canright's positions. That book, W. H. Branson's *In Defense of the Faith* (1933), analyzed and attempted to refute Canright's positions (Neufeld, 1996: 286).

For his part, Canright said that the leaders of the SDA organization felt it was their sacred duty to destroy his reputation and influence if possible. He claimed that the organization attributed evil motives, base sins, and ambitious designs to him. He claimed that SDAs had allegedly reported that he had contracted a terrible disease (they did not specify what disease he had contracted), that the Baptist church had expelled him after he broke it apart, and other things that Canright said were too difficult to write. Canright suspected that the organization would spread the rumor that he wished to return to it and that he had recanted on his deathbed. Therefore, Canright wrote that there was no truth to the SDA-generated rumors that he had recanted, tried to get back into the SDA organization, or considered himself lost because he rejected SDA beliefs. In *Adventism Renounced*, Canright wrote that the contents of the book were his answer to SDA-generated rumors (Canright, 1914: 55-56; 1919: 15).

According to Erikson, “repentance is a public ceremony of admission and a private act of contrition. To repent is to agree that the moral standards of the community are right and that the sentence of the court is just” (Erikson, 1966: 195). Erikson’s statement explains why SDAs were so desperate to prove that Canright had repented and wished to return to the organizational fold. If the organization could convince its members that the dissenter no longer held his/her dissident views and, furthermore, had privately endorsed organizational identity, then it could effectively stop the dissenter’s influence and maintain organizational integrity without fear of losing adherents.

Organizational Response to Waggoner and Jones

Seventh-day Adventists left the 1888 conference deeply divided by the dissenting opinions of Waggoner and Jones (Schwarz, 1979: 190; Knight, 1987: 63).¹²³ The President of the SDA organization was upset that Waggoner and Jones had not sought official approval of their variant views before presenting them in public (Schwarz, 1979: 186). In the aftermath of the 1888 meetings, the SDA organizational leaders voted to suppress any theological discussion regarding Waggoner and Jones's opinions in all organizational schools and papers for fear that it would expand their divergent views and increase their influence. Waggoner and Jones disagreed with the organization's decision (Schwarz, 1979: 186).

It appears that neither side abided by the organization's decision. Ellen White accompanied A. T. Jones throughout most of 1888 and 1889 as he promoted his (and Waggoner's) views throughout the churches of the SDA organization (Knight, 1987: 46, 226; Neufeld, 1996: 832, Schwarz, 1979: 186, 192). Prominent SDA leader, Uriah Smith, used his position as editor of the SDA journal, *The Review*, to write articles accusing Waggoner and Jones (and by default Ellen White) of antinomianism (Schwarz, 1979: 192, 394).¹²⁴

In 1892, Waggoner moved to England as editor of the SDA magazine, *Present Truth*. During his time in England, the SDA organization alleged that he developed an increasingly mystical interpretation of SDA doctrines, such as the sanctuary and investigative judgment. The organization also alleged that

¹²³ Historian Gary Land suggests that the majority of SDAs did not agree with the dissenting opinions of Waggoner and Jones after the 1888 conference (Land, 1996: 153).

¹²⁴ Antinomianism is the belief that Christians are no longer under obligation to any moral laws, since their salvation is an act of grace and therefore, not contingent upon good works or a holy life.

Waggoner began teaching a concept known as “spiritual affinity,” suggesting that in heaven, a person might be married to someone other than his or her earthly partner. When Waggoner returned from England, he and his wife divorced and he remarried. Together with Jones and Kellogg, Waggoner also became one of the leading proponents of pantheism. The SDA organization claimed that because of his divorce and remarriage, Waggoner could no longer work for the organization. One Adventist historian, not willing to admit that the organization fired Waggoner, said that Waggoner’s divorce caused a “separation from denominational employment” (Land, 2005: 315; Neufeld, 1996: 849; Schwarz, 1979: 474).¹²⁵ In order to preserve organizational integrity and cast the dissident in the most negative light possible, White referred to Waggoner’s beliefs regarding pantheism and spiritual affinity as “giving heed to seducing spirits” and “doctrines of the devil” (Froom, 1971: 530).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in 1903, A.T. Jones went to work for John Harvey Kellogg at Battle Creek sanitarium. While there, he began to actively oppose the SDA organization’s attempt to control its adherents and institutions. He also began to actively oppose the prophetic work of White, while at the same time promoting the same pantheistic views as Kellogg and Waggoner (Schwarz, 1979: 292).¹²⁶ Although SDA historians allege that the SDA organization tried many times to work with Jones and to convince him of his theological errors, they claim he was unresponsive to their attempts and they had

¹²⁵ The SDA organization refers to itself as a denomination. Since commentators vary on whether to identify SDAs as a denomination, sect, or cult, I have chosen throughout this thesis to refer to them as an organization.

¹²⁶ General Conference President, A. G. Daniels, saw Waggoner as the chief aggressor in promoting pantheistic ideas, not Kellogg or Jones (Schwarz, 1979: 288).

no choice but to eventually fire him (Neufeld, 1996: 833). In 1907, the SDA organization asked for his ministerial credentials and in 1909, his local church dropped his name from their membership rolls (Land, 2005, 154; Knight, 1987: 247, 248). Just as they did with Canright, the SDA organization alleged that Jones died still believing most SDA doctrines (Neufeld, 1996: 833).¹²⁷

It is more difficult to assess the organization's response to Waggoner and Jones's divergent opinions regarding the law and salvation (discussed in the previous chapter). Ellen White endorsed Waggoner and Jones's views, thereby forcing the SDA organization to reinterpret its stance on the role of the law in the process of salvation. Since part of SDA identity demanded that an adherent must observe the law, it had to reinterpret its understanding of the law while still maintaining its belief regarding the observance of Saturday. To abandon the belief would have meant the abandonment of one of Adventism's most fundamental and well known doctrines. Therefore, the SDA organization reached a compromise. In this compromise, the organization admitted that salvation was indeed an act of grace and therefore not dependent upon Sabbath-observance, but that Sabbath observance was the evidence of a genuine salvation experience.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ In 1915, Jones joined a different SDA congregation, The People's Church in Washington D.C., and was a member of that church when it left the fellowship of SDA churches to become an independent congregation (Froom, 1971: 528).

¹²⁸ SDA fundamental beliefs # 10 and #19 (available on the organization's official website <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>) state the official SDA position on salvation and the role of the law in the life of an adherent. Belief # 10, the experience of salvation, states: In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. This faith which receives salvation comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine

Organizational Response to Kellogg

John Harvey Kellogg challenged the Seventh-day Adventist organization on two levels, organizationally, and theologically. Kellogg's dissident views lead to a longstanding battle between the two camps that finally ended when the organization officially removed Kellogg from its ranks. Kellogg was a leading expert in the medical field, bringing prestige and good will to the organization while he was a part of it. Therefore, the SDA organization likely attempted to keep Kellogg within its boundaries for years before the eventual break because it did not want to lose a man of such prestigious standing in the community.

As Kellogg continued to fight against organizational control of the Battle Creek sanitarium, Ellen White suggested that the SDA organization needed to take control of the sanitarium in order to bring it back under God's control (Canright, 1919: 82). In this way she implied that Kellogg was not under God's control, a charge she regularly made against anyone who crossed her.¹²⁹ When SDA leaders were unable to wrest control of the sanitarium away from Kellogg,

nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment. (2 Cor. 5:17-21; John 3:16; Gal. 1:4; 4:4-7; Titus 3:3-7; John 16:8; Gal. 3:13, 14; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; Rom. 10:17; Luke 17:5; Mark 9:23, 24; Eph. 2:5-10; Rom. 3:21-26; Col. 1:13, 14; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26; John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 8:7-12; Eze. 36:25-27; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rom. 8:1-4; 5:6-10.). Belief # 19, the law of God, states: The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Saviour. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness. (Ex. 20:1-17; Ps. 40:7, 8; Matt. 22:36-40; Deut. 28:1-14; Matt. 5:17-20; Heb. 8:8-10; John 15:7-10; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 John 5:3; Rom. 8:3, 4; Ps. 19:7-14).

¹²⁹ Historian Ronald Numbers suggests that her visions tended to focus on individuals and she often used them as a means of control, even of those closest to her (Numbers, 1992: 220). When Uriah Smith, one of the leaders of the SDA organization rejected a "testimony" Ellen White wrote against him, she accused him of rejecting God (Canright, 1919: 226-228).

Ellen White alleged that God had given her a vision. In this vision, Ellen White alleged that God told her to move the SDA organization out of Battle Creek and establish a new headquarters far away from Kellogg's influence. Between 1901 and 1903, the SDA organization moved its headquarters to another city, angering Kellogg, who feared he would lose most of his SDA staff (Schwarz, 1995: 183). In this way, the SDA organization attempted to isolate Kellogg without actually removing him from membership in the organization, a move that no doubt only solidified his deviant status.

The act of isolation seems to have little positive effect on dissidents, as Erikson demonstrated in *Wayward Puritans*. Discussing incarceration as one form of isolating offenders from the mainstream in order to rehabilitate them, Erikson said that many of the institutions designed to discourage deviant behaviour (such as prisons – the ultimate form of isolation) actually perpetuate deviant behaviour. Erikson also suggested that this form of isolation actually enforced the deviant's sense of alienation from the mainstream (Erikson, 1966: 14).

When Kellogg submitted his book, *The Living Temple*, to the SDA organization's publishing house, the publishers refused to print it, alleging that it contained pantheistic views (Schwarz, 1979: 291-292). Ellen White had said that Kellogg's pantheistic views could destroy Adventist belief in the sanctuary and the atonement (Schwarz, 1995: 185), and those statements, coupled with the organization's distrust of Kellogg, continued to isolate Kellogg from the SDA organization and eventually led to the final crisis between the two (Froom, 1971:

350). For his part, Kellogg refused to renounce his pantheistic views and continued to undermine SDA confidence in Ellen White as a prophet. Consequently, SDA President, A. G. Daniels, determined to defend her, no matter the cost (Schwarz, 1979: 292; Willis, 2003: 7), and this activity brought Kellogg and the organization into an open conflict that lasted until 1905 (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 251). After 1905, the SDA organization alleged that it could no longer work with Kellogg and decided that any attempted reconciliation would be futile. Still, not until 1907 did the SDA organization dismiss Kellogg from membership (Land, 2005: 158; Neufeld, 1996: 852; Schwarz, 1979: 296).

On October 7, 1907, a committee from the Battle Creek church, where Kellogg had his membership, grilled Dr. Kellogg for eight hours (SDA historians say it was a seven hour interview) regarding his view of Ellen White and her prophecies. Kellogg told the committee he did not think God inspired her (Canright, 1919: 215-219; Schwartz, 1979: 296). The Pastor of the Battle Creek Tabernacle church then outlined the main charges against Dr. Kellogg. They included failure to attend the church, failure to pay tithe, antagonism towards the “gifts manifest in the church” (implying Ellen White), and working with others to overthrow the organization. Interestingly, the pastor did not mention Kellogg’s pantheism. The committee that had grilled Kellogg earlier in the week concurred with the pastor’s assessment and the church voted unanimously to remove Kellogg from membership (Schwarz, 1995: 189, 190).

Kellogg struck the final blow in this battle fourteen months after the organization dropped him from membership. Kellogg and the board of directors

at the Battle Creek Sanitarium purged all remaining SDA leaders from the Sanitarium's legal association, which technically controlled the Sanitarium (Schwarz, 1979: 297). This move effectively gave Kellogg full control of the Battle Creek Sanitarium and severed all remaining connections between Kellogg and the SDA organization.

Response to Dissenters as Reinforcement of Group Identity

As noted earlier, Erikson had said that suppression of dissent was a vital component in the creation of group identity (Erikson, 1966: 4). From the available literature, it appears as if the SDA organization faced little, if any, dissent until it began to create a theological identity and organizational structure for itself. As the initial group of disenfranchised Millerites began to create a distinct identity that included both a hierarchical structure and a solid statement of fundamental beliefs, dissenters rose to challenge this new identity. Not until the organization had already begun to establish its identity did it need to suppress dissent in order to maintain that identity. The more structured the SDA organization became, the more it invited, and resisted, dissenting opinions.

Durkheim may have anticipated this increase in dissent when he suggested that the better a structure was articulated, the more it offered a healthy resistance to all modification (Durkheim, 1895: 70). The term "healthy resistance" implies that there are also unhealthy ways to resist modifications, some of which may even cause the structure to fail. Therefore, a healthy resistance to modifications suggests a resistance that increases the strength and durability of the structure. As the SDA organization dealt with suggested modifications from dissenting

individuals and groups, it needed to consider the dissenting opinions as it reified its theology and built its structural identity in order to maintain its present and future integrity. Consideration of, and response to, dissenting opinions does not assume an immediate acceptance or rejection of the dissenting opinion. The discussion propagated by dissent promotes quality decision-making processes within the group while preventing the group from making premature decisions (De Dreu, 2007: 260). This was true of the SDA organization as it dealt with dissenters during its early years. Said differently, dissenting opinions benefited the formation and maintenance of the SDA organization by ensuring carefully developed decisions within that organization.

While dissent can lead to benefits for the organization, a failure to suppress the dissenting opinion immediately can have negative repercussions for the organization. Even if the organization ultimately rejects the dissenter and his/her dissenting opinion, a window of time exists in which adherents to the organization may be exposed to the dissenting opinion and even subscribe to it. Without organizational guidance or instruction on how to understand or respond to the dissenting opinion, members of the organization may begin to engage in their own cognitive processing of the dissenting opinion in an effort to understand it. This process can lead some adherents to validate the dissenting opinion and over time may lead certain organizational adherents to convert to the dissenting opinion (De Dreu, 2007: 252). Therefore it is important for the organization to weigh the costs and benefits associated with both the official response to the dissenting opinion and the amount of time that it takes to form that response. The

following examples show how the SDA organization strengthened group identity through the suppression of dissenting opinions as predicted by both Durkheim's and Erikson's theories on dissent and the formation of social identity.

Effects of Dissent on the Organizational Structure and Control

Mechanisms of the SDA Organization

In the case of the organizational structure of the SDA organization, as well as the control that the organization asserted over its various institutions and adherents, dissenting opinions only served to strengthen the emerging structure of the organization. As Kellogg and Jones attempted to challenge the authority and control of the organization, they found themselves forced outside of the central organization structure as it moved to solidify its structure and enforce control over its adherents (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 251).

In 1862, the SDA organization began to organize local churches into state-wide associations known as conferences. Eventually, the organization established the General Conference to maintain control of the local conferences, thus establishing the pattern for the hierarchical structure of the SDA organization (Schwarz, 1979: 96, 97). In language reminiscent of the papacy, Ellen White described the General Conference as "the highest authority that God has upon the earth" (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 102; White, 1885c: 492). Currently, the SDA organization continues to maintain a tight control over its empire, forcing dissident individuals and organizations to operate on the fringe of the organization as self-supporting movements without official organizational endorsement.¹³⁰ In

¹³⁰ Examples include Heartland Institute operated by Colin and Russell Standish, SDA dissidents from Australia who currently base their operation out of Virginia

a 1989 study, Oxford research fellow Malcolm Bull, and *Guardian* journalist Keith Lockhart portrayed the SDA organization as “highly structured, centrally controlled, and administratively authoritarian” (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 83, 84).

Effects of Pantheism on the Theology of the SDA Organization

The SDA organization’s response to the dissident theology of pantheism, advocated by Waggoner, Jones, and Kellogg, helped to strengthen SDA beliefs in the atonement, the sanctuary, and the second coming of Christ (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 53; Schwarz, 1995: 185). Ellen White characterized pantheism as the beginning of a great heresy that would attack the basic doctrines of the SDA movement and she warned the organization to guard its fundamental beliefs diligently in preparation for the final stage of this heretical attack (Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications, 1958: 196-197).

Kellogg’s promotion of pantheistic ideas drew from early SDA beliefs. During the mid nineteenth century, Seventh-day Adventists had taught that the Holy Spirit literally entered a person at conversion. This infusion of the Holy Spirit in a new adherent often led to charismatic experiences in Adventist gatherings.¹³¹ As Ellen White grew older she distanced herself (and the organization) from charismatic expressions of worship, but the theology behind those experiences (specifically the literal infusion of the Holy Spirit into the believer) remained a part of SDA theology (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 64-66). As

(<http://www.hartland.edu>); and Good News Unlimited, operated by SDA dissident Desmond Ford (<http://www.goodnewsunlimited.org>). Bull and Lockhart list, Hartland Institute, Wildwood Sanitarium, and Weimer Institute as examples of conservative self-supporting movements that challenge the official SDA organization (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 244-255).

¹³¹Bull and Lockhart suggest that early Adventists experienced ecstatic phenomenon such as crawling on the floor, being slain in the spirit, shouting, and rolling like a hoop, which they attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 65).

well, in her early writings, White had promoted ideas that some alleged were pantheistic;¹³² ideas that Kellogg drew upon in his promotion of pantheism.

As the SDA organization faced the pantheistic threat posed by Kellogg and his associates, it reacted by forming a more comprehensive and systematic theology, one that explained and clarified the separate role that of each of the three members of the Trinitarian God-head had in the process of salvation.¹³³ Eventually, in 1931, the SDA organization published its systematic theological beliefs in a document entitled *Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 66-67). As the SDA organization began to organize and voice its fundamental beliefs, the role of its alleged prophet, Ellen White, became a fundamental doctrine of the growing organization.

Reaffirmation of the Role of Ellen White within the SDA Organization

One of the recurrent dissenting themes that Canright, Kellogg, and Jones had voiced was the disbelief in the prophetic role of Ellen White and the influence that she exerted over the SDA organization because of the status that ensued from that role. As dissenters challenged this role, the SDA organization was able to reaffirm its belief in White's prophetic status. As dissidents charged the organization with following the visions of a deluded woman over the Bible, the

¹³² On page 17 of her book *Education* (1903), White wrote that God was visible in every aspect of creation.

¹³³ Seventh-day Adventists are Trinitarian; they believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal persons. Several SDA fundamental beliefs relate to the position and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a new adherent, but the organization has carefully worded what it perceives to be the manifestations of the Spirit's work in order to avoid the potential for a renewal of early SDA beliefs regarding the evidences of the work of the Spirit mentioned earlier in this section. SDAs also wish to clarify that this Trinitarian view does not promote polytheism (belief in more than one god) or pantheism in any form. To view the specific SDA beliefs regarding the Holy Spirit, see fundamental beliefs #2, #5, #10, and #11 at <http://adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>.

SDA organization responded by reaffirming its belief in the necessity of the Bible and the correct interpretation of it through the writings of White. SDA leaders also argued that the Bible was superior to White's writings and intimated that the organization would reject Ellen White's visions if those visions contradicted it (Schwarz, 1979: 179-181). Luckily for the SDA organization, White's visions allegedly helped to clarify the meaning of the Bible, and therefore her visions could not contradict it. In this atmosphere, it was not long before many ministers in the organization taught that the only way to understand the Bible was through the writings of Ellen White (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 26-27).

Throughout the twentieth century, various SDA dissidents have continued to challenge the prophetic status of Ellen White. Two current dissidents stand out. The first, Walter Rea, published *The White Lie* (1982) in which he documented White's plagiarism of other authors that she then attempted to pass off as inspired information given directly from God. The second, Ronald Numbers, published *Prophetess of Health* (1992) outlining the development of her beliefs related to health, as well as possible alternate explanations for her alleged visions.

These two dissenters, among many, continue a dissenting tradition in the SDA organization, begun by Canright, Kellogg, Jones, and others. Accordingly, the SDA organization has reinterpreted its stance on Ellen White. While still affirming her alleged prophetic status and the belief that her writings constitute an identifying mark of the remnant church, recently Seventh-day Adventist scholars have applied critical scholarship to the Bible and the writings of Ellen White, resulting in a decrease of their alleged supernatural characteristics (Bull and

Lockhart, 1989: 90). Bull and Lockhart's assertion seems to suggest that the SDA organization holds White's writings on the same level as the Bible, since they apply the same critical scholarship to both books and have lessened the supernatural characteristics of both instead of just doing so to White's writings. It seems that the SDA organization is unwilling to subject White's writings to any criticism or critique to which they would not also subject the Bible. If White's writings are suspect, then so too is the Bible. Certain SDA scholars, however, like George Knight, believe that God did not inspire Ellen White verbally and therefore, mistakes exist in her writings, perhaps lessening her prophetic gift in his view (Knight, 1987: 232, 233). While dissidents have not managed to completely undermine SDA belief in the alleged prophetic status of White, they have managed to make the SDA organization re-evaluate its stance on her.

Sabbath, the Law, and Dissent

In the Seventh-day Adventist fundamental statement of beliefs, beliefs #19 and #20 reaffirmed the organization's commitment to Sabbath observance and the Law of the Old Testament. Despite Ellen White's assertion that the Ten Commandments were part of the Old Testament law and therefore eradicated when Jesus died on the cross at Calvary, Seventh-day Adventists chose to ignore her allegedly inspired advice and instead affirm that proper observance of the Ten Commandments was still binding upon all Christians. Fundamental belief #19 expresses the organization's position regarding the law as follows:

The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's

love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and *are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment.*

Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Saviour. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments (italics added).¹³⁴

Included in the Ten Commandments is the fourth commandment that states in part, “remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (Exodus 20: 8). As Adventists affirmed the necessity of the Ten Commandments, they placed a primary focus on the fourth commandment. Fundamental belief #20 contains the SDA organization’s intention to continue observing the Jewish Sabbath despite the arguments posed by dissidents. Part of fundamental belief #20 states:

The beneficent Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. *The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom (italics added).*¹³⁵

¹³⁴ From the official SDA website

<http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>. Downloaded June 26, 2009.

¹³⁵ From the official SDA website

<http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>. Downloaded June 26, 2009.

It is interesting to note that these two statements allege that the law requires observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, and that the precepts of the law are the standard of the judgment. They also, however, offer the contradictory belief that God saves an individual based on that individual's belief, and not because of that individual's works (such as proper Sabbath observance). As I showed in previous chapters, SDAs believe that all who observe Sunday as the holy day receive the "mark of the beast" at the end of time and are therefore unsaved, while those who observe Saturday receive the seal of God and are saved. Therefore, it would appear that despite dissident challenges, the organization continues to affirm Saturday observance as a requirement of salvation (or at least as a sign of salvation).¹³⁶

As is true of most religious organizations, a lack of consensus exists among Seventh-day Adventists regarding many of their fundamental beliefs. While the official organization may promote a certain belief, various members of the organization often do not hold the same one, or if they do, attach less significance to it than the organization does. Bull and Lockhart assert that the SDA organization allows for a diversity of opinions without division (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 41). They stated that the intellectual life of the organization was so structured that plurality of opinion was an almost inevitable result. Bull and Lockhart found it difficult to know where to "find" SDA theology since some doctrines (such as the sanctuary) are officially promulgated by the organization in

¹³⁶Bull and Lockhart suggested, however, that in recent discussion regarding Sabbath observance, SDA theologians focus more on the practical benefits of having a Sabbath than on which day is the correct day (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 41, 42). In this way, perhaps, the dissenting opinions of early SDA dissenters may still have some influence on SDA thinking.

its statement of beliefs and official publications, but widely doubted by SDA academics (Bull and Lockhart, 1989: 82-84). If this is true, then it might be possible to say that certain SDA academics, as well as all who share a diversity of opinions within the SDA organization are continuing to promulgate (in various forms) the dissenting opinions of Canright, Waggoner, Jones, Kellogg, and others, even if the organization does not officially acknowledge their opinions. As dissenters continue to voice dissenting opinions within the organization, they force the organization to continually re-evaluate and either re-affirm or reinterpret its identity.

Group Identity – the Reintroduction of Cognitive Dissonance

In group settings, denial of reality exists when a large group of people is able to maintain an opinion or belief even in the face of continual definite evidence to the contrary. If there is a large enough group whose members associate with each other, and support each other in their continuing opinion or belief, then it is possible for that group of people to convince themselves of the truth of their opinion despite the continuation of contradictory evidence (Festinger, 1957: 199-200, 243-245). Therefore, if dissenters are the source of contradictory evidence for a group, why does dissent have such a strong and positive impact on group identity? According to sociologist Anthony R. Harris and anthropologist Gary D. Hill, the Durkheimian model of deviance suggested a homeostatic loop between social solidarity and deviance: as solidarity decreased, levels of deviance increased, which, in turn, tended to raise levels of solidarity (Harris and Hill, 1982: 169). While this statement underscores the connection

between dissent and group identity, it fails to explain why this homeostatic loop exists or how it functions.

I suggest that a homeostatic loop exists between dissent and group identity because dissidents reintroduce cognitive dissonance into group dynamics and consequently challenge both the dissonance reducing strategies of the group and the resultant identity with which the group reduced its original dissonance. Therefore, the group must re-evaluate whether or not the original dissonance reducing strategies and subsequent identity are still valid. In short, the group must re-evaluate or rethink its own identity. If taken seriously, the dissenter's challenges to SDA identity would force adherents to rethink that identity, or said differently, force them to relive the cognitive dissonance that had originally caused them to join the SDA organization. As dissidents challenged the identity and structure of the SDA organization, members of the organization faced a renewal of "old" feelings of cognitive dissonance. Dissidents continuously held up evidence that was contradictory to SDA theology, thus threatening the survival of the group. In this way, dissidents forced the organization to rethink its beliefs and organizational structure, both of which the organization created to deal with its initial feelings of cognitive dissonance following the events of 1844. As the SDA organization reaffirmed its identity in the face of dissident challenges, it showed how effective its initial dissonance reducing strategies had been.

The successful reduction of post-decision dissonance is further evidenced by the difficulty of reversing a decision once it is made and in the implication that changed cognition has on future relevant action (Festinger, 1957: 83). Therefore,

it would have been difficult for organizational leaders or adherents to accept dissident opinions. To accept the deviant positions of the dissenters in their midst, the SDA organization would have been admitting that the original dissonance reducing strategies it employed were insufficient and therefore faulty. When faced with the reintroduction of cognitive dissonance at the hands of internal dissenters, the SDA organization re-affirmed its own self-identity and strengthened its own self-image. Through self-reaffirmation, the SDA organization effectively reduced or eliminated the cognitive dissonance that dissenters had reintroduced into the group dynamic. In this way the SDA organization ensured the stability and longevity of its religious identity.

Chapter 4: Conclusion and Implications

It is impossible to understand the history of the SDA organization both theologically and structurally without acknowledging the significant contribution that dissenters made to the organization. To fully appreciate the role of dissent in the formation and maintenance of SDA group identity, it is important to understand the formation of the SDA organization in light of Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance. It is also important to see the role that dissent played in the formation of group identity through the lens of Emile Durkheim and Kai Erikson's work on deviance.

The SDA organization began in the mid nineteenth century as a way to reduce the cognitive dissonance that many of William Miller's followers experienced after the events of 1844. As Zygmunt (1972: 257-258) pointed out, disconfirmation can invalidate the charisma of the leader, lead to attrition of members, and give rise to new leaders and organizations. The SDA leaders and their organization rose precisely as disconfirmation invalidated Miller's leadership, and most of his adherents left the movement he had unintentionally begun.

Festinger (1957: 27) posited that as an individual or group enacted dissonance reducing strategies in order to alleviate cognitive dissonance, many other related cognitions would also be affected and therefore change as well. Therefore, changing one cognition would likely lead to a change in many cognitions. The dissonance reducing strategies the early SDA founders employed eventually led to the creation of a religious organization with a distinct set of

fundamental beliefs and a hierarchical structure of governance. Their attempt to change a single dissonant cognition (the failure of Christ to return in 1844) affected all other cognitions in relationship to it (such as their position regarding judgment, the sanctuary, the process of salvation, and prophecy). In order to ensure unity within the organization, the SDA leaders turned to an alleged prophet, Ellen White, for divine guidance, thereby claiming that they had divine authority for their divergent beliefs and practices. White's alleged prophetic guidance gave the SDA organization a source of new information in the form of direct revelation from God and innovative interpretations of the Bible. This new information further reduced SDA dissonance since it allowed SDA adherents to "see" how their particular beliefs and practices were actually in line with the "true" interpretation of the Bible. Actively seeking out sources of new information that provided adherents with cognitions consistent with actions taken was a dissonance reducing strategy that Festinger had predicted would happen in such circumstances (Festinger, 1957: 83, 136-137).

The SDA organization employed various cognitive dissonance reducing strategies during its formative years. Rather than discard their belief in the validity of 1844 as an important date in prophetic history (as Miller had done), the future leaders of the SDA organization began to search for an alternative explanation in order to explain their continued belief in the significance of 1844. In doing so, they developed a theology that deviated significantly from mainstream Protestantism, thereby ensuring their place alongside other fringe religious movements such as Latter-day Saints and Christian Scientists, both of

which also claimed divine guidance through a prophetic leader. Eventually the SDA organization began to proselytize actively and aggressively in order to further reduce the dissonance it had experienced after 1844.

As Zald and Ash pointed out, when a group's ideology leads adherents to question the basis of authority, a greater likelihood exists of factions and splitting (Zald and Ash, 1966: 337). The SDA's first dissidents challenged both its deviant theology and its control over adherents, and in response the organization continued to refine its teachings as it tightened control over members. The main area of dissent focused on the alleged prophetic role of Ellen White and the organization's reliance on her often contradictory visions as the basis for belief and action. Dissidents also challenged the SDA belief that a person needed to observe the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20, especially the command to observe Saturday as the holy day, as a prerequisite for salvation. As the organization continued to exert control over its members and institutions, John Harvey Kellogg spearheaded dissent against organizational control. These dissidents challenged the normative beliefs and behaviors that the organization expected of all adherents (Merton, 1959: 178). By refusing to confine themselves within the organization's boundaries, dissidents forced the organization to label their actions and beliefs as deviant in order to maintain organizationally enforced boundaries (Erikson, 1966: 10, 13).

Eventually the SDA organization and these dissenters parted company; however, dissenters benefited the organization in several ways. Durkheim (1895: 67) suggested that dissenting behavior was important for preserving a stable group

identity, and Erikson (1966: 3-4) felt that social organization was impossible without dissent. The SDA organization articulated its fundamental statement of beliefs, in part, as a response to dissenters. Without the constant attack of dissenters, the organization may have never officially outlined its core beliefs or felt the need to organize. As dissenters questioned the organization's dependence on White, the SDA organization was able to define its position on, and relation to, the continuation of prophetic gifts and leadership beyond the first century Christian Church. In affirming its belief in the modern manifestation of prophetic gifts, the SDA organization publically acknowledged its dependence on a prophet to lead the organization.

Dissenters also caused the SDA organization to re-think at least one core belief related to salvation. Prior to the dissent that Waggoner and Jones voiced in 1888, the SDA organization taught that an individual's salvation was partially dependent upon that individual's ability to correctly observe the Ten Commandments. Waggoner and Jones challenged this view, suggesting instead that individuals received salvation as a free gift of grace, independent of their ability to observe the law. After Ellen White endorsed Waggoner and Jones's viewpoint, the SDA organization re-worded its belief statement to indicate that while salvation was indeed an act of grace, proper observance of the Ten Commandments confirmed an individual's saved status.

Festinger (1957: 31) said that the reduction of cognitive dissonance is the process that an organism employs in order to reach a state of psychological homeostasis. Harris and Hill (1982: 169) suggested that Durkheim's work on

deviance showed that deviance provided the opportunity for groups to experience homeostasis. In the case of the SDA organization, dissenters provided the mechanism whereby the organization could continue to maintain the homeostasis it had enjoyed in its initial stages. It is unlikely that the SDA organization would have maintained this homeostatic state if not for the arrival of dissidents. Either the organization would have eventually reintegrated itself into mainstream Protestant theology, or it would have become so deviant that only a very select few would have maintained their allegiance to the organization and it would have eventually disappeared. The deviant theology of the SDA organization caused dissidents within the organization to experience cognitive dissonance in the same way that early SDA founders experienced cognitive dissonance after Miller's predictions regarding 1844 proved false. SDA dissidents employed dissonance reducing strategies in an attempt to achieve a state of internal homeostasis. The strategies that dissidents used included questioning the belief system and structure of the SDA organization. Consequently, they caused the SDA organization to experience a renewal of cognitive dissonance that in turn led the SDA organization to reaffirm or reinterpret its identity in order to achieve a state of internal homeostasis.

In this thesis I have argued that dissent can have a positive impact on social organization and group identity (especially within new religious movements). While early dissenters within the Seventh-day Adventist organization effectively demonstrate this theory, it is important to ask why their dissenting opinions did not critically damage the organization. Canright,

Waggoner, Jones, and Kellogg did not significantly hurt the SDA organization in any way. Although their dissent struck at the very heart of the group, challenged its basis of authority and its fundamental doctrines, the organization continued to grow. Despite the fact that these dissenters were well respected leaders in the organization and one would suspect that at least some organizational adherents would follow them (since their positions of authority within the organization would have lent credibility to their arguments), none did. No significant schisms developed as the result of their dissent, and the organization did not face significant internal disruption as a result of their challenges. Apart from Canright's books, these dissenters quickly fell into obscurity after they parted ways with the organization. Surely, however, dissent can have a negative impact on organizations, and it is important to attempt to understand why these early SDA dissenters did not.

The work of sociologist Rodney Stark (1987) might be helpful here, since he suggested that certain factors needed to exist in order for a new religious movement to succeed. Although my thesis does not suggest that early SDA dissenters intended to start their own religious movements, Stark's theoretical model suggested that under certain conditions, they might have achieved a higher level of success and done greater damage to the organization, even to the point of starting successful schisms from the SDA organization. Therefore, I give a brief overview of Stark's theory and apply it to early SDA dissenters, showing how, under these circumstances, dissenters might have succeeded in damaging the SDA organization.

Stark theorizes eight areas that a new religious movement must embrace in order to experience success (Stark, 1987: 13).¹³⁷ First, it must retain cultural continuity with the conventional faiths of the societies in which it appeared or originated. Second, it must maintain a medium level of tension with the surrounding environment. “It must be deviant, but not too deviant.” Third, it must effectively mobilize, have strong governance, and have a high level of individual commitment. Fourth, it must attract and maintain a normal sex and age structure. Fifth, it must occur within a favorable ecology. Stark describes a favorable ecology as one in which the religious economy is relatively unregulated, conventional faiths are weakened by secularization, and a level of success is possible within a generation. Sixth, it does not become isolated. Seventh, it resists secularization. Eighth, it effectively socializes the young. Apart from the Mormon organization, Stark suggests that most new religious movements violate one or more of these conditions for success and are therefore doomed to fail (Stark, 1987: 12). I believe that Stark’s theoretical model is applicable to dissident individuals within an organization since they, like members of any new religious movement, believe that the established religion is in need of change.

Mormonism and early Christianity both succeeded in establishing successful movements because neither organization asked adherents to discard their religious heritage and adopt a new one. They simply asked adherents to add to their current understanding. The early Christian church did not ask Jews to

¹³⁷ Stark defined an organization’s success as the ability an organization had to dominate one or more societies. He defined domination as the result of conversion of the masses and/or elites as well as the ability of the organization to influence the beliefs and culture of a society (Stark, 1987: 12). Martin Luther’s dissent from Catholicism is a prime example of this type of success.

discard their heritage. Christians offered the “Son of God” to the familiar messianic themes inherent in Judaism and built on themes in the Hebrew Bible, eventually offering the New Testament as a companion. Christians also maintained a cultural continuity with the pagan world through the establishment of worship on Sunday (pagan day of the sun) and Christmas (in line with the winter solstice, a primary pagan holiday). Mormonism taught that it was the fulfillment of Christianity and offered a third Testament as a companion to the Old and New, not as a replacement (Stark, 1987: 13, 14). SDA dissidents rejected Ellen White as a source of authority but did not offer a viable alternative. Rather than seeing White in a new light, dissidents rejected her completely.

Stark also suggested that in order for a movement to succeed, it could not be in too high a state of tension with the original organization. If the new movement was too deviant, Stark suggested that it would not attract new adherents. Therefore the deviance must not be *too deviant* (Stark, 1987: 15-16). Most likely, SDA dissidents deviated too strongly from the central beliefs of the organization to attract a significant following, since conversion would have meant that the new adherents would have had little if any connection to the organization they had only recently embraced. Dissidents rejected all of the fundamental beliefs of the SDA organization, effectively attempting to bring it back in line with mainstream Protestantism. Since most SDA adherents had left mainstream Protestantism to join the SDA organization, there was little chance that they would suddenly reject it because a few dissidents challenged its fundamental beliefs or prophetic basis of authority.

Little evidence suggests that SDA dissidents ever attempted to mobilize into any type of movement or schismatic group and this lack of mobilization is perhaps why SDA dissidents failed to damage the SDA organization. Stark (1987: 16) suggested that movements that have a guru authority figure can demand great personal commitment from adherents and therefore can effectively mobilize them, but SDA dissidents were not gurus and did not create followings they could mobilize against the organization. John Harvey Kellogg perhaps came closest to achieving a sort of guru status or having the ability to form a schismatic group through the Battle Creek Sanitarium, yet nothing suggests that he ever tried to organize dissenters. It seems that Kellogg simply wanted to have control over the Battle Creek Sanitarium and only entered into conflict with the SDA organization when it threatened that control. Kellogg never demanded that those who worked for him separate themselves from the SDA organization or stop adhering to SDA beliefs and begin following his pantheistic position.

I skip Stark's fourth condition regarding the necessity to attract a range of age and gender adherents since (as stated above) nothing suggests that SDA dissidents attempted to attract anyone. Stark's fifth condition, however, is extremely important to the current discussion. Stark (1987: 19-22) suggested that successful NRMs needed to begin in a favourable ecology. For Stark, a favourable ecology meant that the religious environment was unregulated, that the current religious organization(s) were sufficiently secularized, and that the size and structure of the surrounding environment promised a successful movement within one generation. For Stark, the promise of a successful movement within

one generation was tied to the imminent demise of movement's founder (Stark, 1987: 21). In the case of the first SDA dissenters, their challenges took place in a highly regulated organizational atmosphere that was far from secularized, and the dissenters lacked any formal structures through which they could gain converts.

A favourable ecology also meant that the current religious organization no longer effectively served market demand due to its secularization (Stark, 1987: 19). New religious movements could then offer disgruntled consumers an alternative to ineffective religious institutions. The SDA organization, however, was not in danger of secularization when its earliest dissidents appeared. If anything, dissidents like Kellogg introduced a decidedly secular strain into the SDA organization, one the organization quickly moved to eliminate. I have demonstrated in this thesis that the SDA organization existed primarily to meet the needs of individuals experiencing cognitive dissonance as the result of the 1844 disappointment. It is unlikely therefore, that adherents would reject the very organization that helped reduce the dissonance they had experienced when that organization had helped adherents reduce their dissonance.

When dissenters fail to meet Stark's conditions (conditions that Stark himself admitted probably did not cover the range of conditions necessary for successful schismatic movements [Stark, 1987: 25-26]), these dissenters do not significantly damage the organization or produce successful schismatic movements. Rather, in instances where dissenters fail to damage an organization, it may be possible for these organizations (especially religious organizations), to view dissenters as a necessary component of continued cohesiveness within the

organization. As I have demonstrated in this thesis, the SDA organization during its formative years built and maintained its religious identity due in large part to the continual eruption of dissent within the organization. Dissidents reintroduced cognitive dissonance into the SDA organization, thereby forcing the organization to re-evaluate the dissonance reducing strategies it employed during its initial formation.

Today, the Seventh-day Adventist organization is a multi-faceted, world-wide organization that unites people of various cultures and socio-economic backgrounds into one semi-cohesive group. A fundamental statement of beliefs holds this organization together, but various groups within the SDA organization emphasize the importance of different elements of the fundamental statement of beliefs. As I showed in previous chapters, although the SDA organization officially endorses these fundamental beliefs, some academics within the organization dismiss traditional interpretations as well as the veracity of certain beliefs. Despite these differences of opinion, the organization continues to present a united front to the world, both theologically and organizationally.

As long as dissenters continue to challenge the fundamental beliefs of a religious organization, that organization will have ample opportunity to strengthen its identity. The organization must not always reject the dissenter's opinions, since on occasion the dissenter may raise valid challenges to the organization's identity. In instances where the dissenter raises valid objections (that the organization recognizes as valid) the organization may benefit from a renegotiation of its traditional identity that includes all or part of the dissenting

opinion if it strengthens its overall integrity. In cases where the dissenter voices arguments that the organization rejects, the organization will be able to publically reaffirm its original identity, proving that the “old” or traditional beliefs are still valid. In this way the organization may continue to maintain its identity amidst an ever-changing theological landscape that includes the challenges of modernity and post-modernity.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, the SDA organization experienced a new eruption of dissent from dissidents such as Walter Rea,¹³⁸ Desmond Ford,¹³⁹ Dale Ratzlaff,¹⁴⁰ and Russell and Colin Standish.¹⁴¹ These latest dissidents have given the SDA organization the necessary means to reaffirm its beliefs and show adherents that it is still vigorously defending its identity. Although dissenters hope to change one or more aspects of an organization, my research has demonstrated that in certain cases, dissent accomplishes the opposite. Dissent can strengthen organizational identity, and organizations of any type should welcome the opportunities that dissenters offer.

¹³⁸ As already mentioned, former SDA minister Walter Rea published *The White Lie*. In his book, Rea challenged the prophetic status of Ellen White. More information on Walter Rea, as well as other challenges to Ellen White’s alleged prophetic status, is available at <http://www.ellenwhiteexposed.com>.

¹³⁹ Desmond Ford was an Adventist academic and minister for over thirty years. In 1980, the SDA organization revoked his ministerial credentials and fired him from his position as a teacher at Pacific Union College (an SDA university). In 1980, Desmond Ford published *Daniel 8:14 The Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgement*, in which he presented his dissenting views regarding the basic fundamental SDA beliefs in the investigative judgment. More information on Desmond Ford is available at his website, <http://www.goodnewsunlimited.org>.

¹⁴⁰ Dale Ratzlaff, an Adventist minister for thirteen years, left the SDA organization in 1981. He is the author of several books disputing SDA theology that are available on his website, <http://www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.org>.

¹⁴¹ Colin and Russell Standish founded Heartland Institute, a self-supporting educational and health institute. Heartland ministries claim that the Satan has infiltrated the SDA organization and diluted its original message. Heartland claims that God has called it to re-establish the truths of the SDA organization. More information on Heartland Ministries and its leaders is available at <http://www.heartland.edu/about/>. Russell Standish died in 2008.

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Appendix 1

Examples of Ellen White's Emotional Instability and the Dramatic and
Public Nature of Her Early Visions and Healings¹⁴²

Emotional Instability

“While listening to sermons describing hell, my imagination would be so wrought upon that the perspiration would start, and it was difficult to suppress a cry of anguish, for I seemed already to feel the pains of perdition” (White, 1915: 29 – 32).

“I have [often] thought that many inmates of insane asylums were brought there by experiences similar to my own” (White, 1885a: 25).

“My health was so poor that I was in constant bodily suffering, and to all appearances had but a short time to live. I was only seventeen years of age, small and frail, unused to society, and naturally so timid and retiring that it was painful for me to meet strangers” (White, 1915: 69).

During one alleged vision, she claimed she went to the throne room in heaven where Jesus frowned at her and turned his face away from her because she refused to relay his correction to other people in as stern or harsh a terms as the alleged vision had demanded (White: 1858: 60 – 61).

In a letter to the *Review and Herald* in 1856, she claimed that she became discouraged when Seventh-day Adventists did not listen to her. She also implied that God gave her fewer visions when SDAs did not listen to her (in Numbers, 1992: 236).

¹⁴² *Prophetess of Health* by Ronald Numbers (1992: 228-263) contains a similar appendix with many more examples.

She claimed to suffer “peculiar trials of the mind.” When she asked her angel why she suffered, the angel (in answer to her question) showed her all of her past life when Satan tried to destroy her in various ways. She claimed that she and her husband James were constant targets of Satan’s attacks and that God often sent holy angels to save them from Satan’s plans to destroy them (White, 1885a: 346 – 347).

At one meeting where she was supposed to speak, she was so mentally ill that she could not talk. In this state, she “staggered to the tent . . . and told the preaching brethren on the [stage] that if they would sustain me by their prayers I would speak” (White, 1885a: 604 – 605).

She was uncertain about her own mental state of health. Often she wrote that she was depressed and discouraged for months at a time (White, 1885b: 604). Then later she would write, ““Do you ever see me gloomy, despondant, [or] complaining? I have a faith that forbids it. Those who follow Christ most closely are not gloomy”” (quoted in Numbers, 1992: 241).

Public Nature of Her Visions and Miraculous Recovery from Illness

“[When] it pleased the Lord to give me a vision in a [public] meeting, some would say that it was the effect of excitement and mesmerism. These things weighed heavily upon my spirits, and in the confusion I was sometimes tempted to doubt my own experiences” (White, 1915: 88 – 90).

During Ellen White’s first public prayer she became so “overwhelmed” that she fainted and lost consciousness. At first, many people in the public meeting wanted to bring in physicians, thinking she was seriously ill, but Ellen’s

mother and other “experienced” Christians assured everyone that the power of God had overcome her (White, 1915: 38).

In a letter written in 1851, Ellen White claimed that while she was so ill she could not sit up, the SDA “brethren” had come in and prayed over her and while they were praying she alleged to have received a vision and ““was taken off into a deep plunge of glory”” (quoted in Numbers, 1992: 235).

In 1858, Ellen White suffered a stroke in public just as she was getting ready to write *The Great Controversy*. Months later, Ellen White claimed that God gave her a vision in which he showed her that her stroke had really been an attempt by Satan to kill her and thus stop her work on the book (White, 1860: 271 – 272).

Often during public meetings she would become so ill that those assembled feared for her life. In those instances, her husband would carry her through the crowd to a waiting boat or (railroad) car (White, 1885a: 604 – 605).

At one camp meeting, she was so ill she asked to lie on a couch at the front of the room during the meeting. At the end of the sermon, she attempted to get up to address the crowd. At that moment, she claimed the power of God filled her so that she could speak and everyone commented on the change in her appearance (White, 1915: 264).

One SDA historian, R. W. Schwarz, described one of Ellen White’s alleged visions that occurred during a public meeting in Poland, Maine. Schwarz wrote:

During public visions, which might come while she was praying or speaking, Ellen at first lost all physical strength; then she received supernatural strength such that even the strongest persons could not control her bodily movements. Throughout a vision – one lasted nearly four hours – there was no evidence of respiration, yet her heartbeat and facial color continued normal. Although her eyes remained open, she appeared unconscious of her surroundings. She might move around the room gracefully, and occasionally speak words or phrases indicative of what she was seeing (1979: 65).

At one meeting, a man who did not believe that Ellen White was a prophet said he would continue in his disbelief unless the same physical manifestations that Ellen White experienced during her alleged visions also happened to another man in attendance at the meeting that evening. As soon as he said it, SDA historians allege that the indicated man fell prostrate and unconscious, just as Ellen White was at the time. This alleged “miraculous” act served to unite the entire Portland church behind White as a truly inspired prophet (Spalding, 1961: 72).

During one alleged vision, Ellen White alleged that a giant fireball struck her on the chest and knocked her unconscious. When she revived, a man who had been sitting with the company of people that evening said he had seen the actual fireball strike her and that he now was a believer (Spalding, 1961: 75).

SDAs allege that during a four-hour vision in Randolph, Mass, Ellen White held a giant Bible over her head for the duration of the vision and quoted

scripture from it while turning the pages to the exact scriptures without looking at them. People standing on chairs around her read the exact texts she was reading. She used this alleged vision to rebuke the fanaticism of some of her detractors and non-believers (Spalding, 1961: 142-143; White, 1969: 26).