

How Ellen G. White understood the concept of worldliness in the testimonies for the church series

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Introduction

The search for purity, holiness, and separation of earthly affairs has been debated in Christianity for centuries. The relations of the Church and civilization intrigue historians, theologians, politicians and churchmen, Catholics and Protestants, Christians and antichristians throughout the ages.² The Seventh-day Adventist church is no different. After his retirement announcement in 1978, the former worldwide president of the denomination, Robert H. Pierson, delivered an "An Earnest Appeal" urging the church to resist the tendency of secularization at all costs.³

Referring to a development model from a sect to a church, he states that when the church reaches the fourth generation, more "attention is given to contemporary culture, with interest in the arts, music, architecture, literature. The movement seeks to become 'relevant' to contemporary society by becoming involved with popular causes."⁴ He emotionally pleads that "must never happen to the Seventh-day Adventist Church."⁵

Ellen G. White, the most influential voice in Seventh-day Adventism, wrote extensively about secularization's dangers and urged the SDA against a worldly faith and lifestyle. Simple research shows that the term "worldliness" appears at least 6,000 in her lifetime works and the cognate "conformity to the world" more than 150 times.⁶ Although it is a common term, it is at least surprising that only a little was written about her

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² NIEBUHR, H. Richard. **Christ and Culture**. New York, NY: Harper One, 2001.

³ He referred to a paper written in 1975 by Beatrice S. Neall, then a graduate student at Andrews University, in which she applies to the Seventh-day Adventist church the Ernst Troeltsch and H. Richard Niebuhr's sociological concept of the evolution of a religious group from a sect to an established church. The paper entitled "The Covenant: God's Plan for Maintaining Loyalty" was adapted and published in 1997 in the Ministry Magazine. NEALL, Ralph; NEALL, Beatrice. Passing the Torch. **Ministry**, fevereiro, 1997. See also NIEBUHR, H. Richard. **The Social Sources of Denominationalism**. New York, NY: Holt, 1929.

⁴ PIERSON, Robert H. An Earnest Appeal from the Retiring President of the General Conference. **Adventist Review**, 26 out. 1978, p. 10.

⁵ PIERSON, Robert H. An Earnest Appeal from the Retiring President of the General Conference. **Adventist Review**, 26 out. 1978, p. 10.

⁶ Of course, not all entries of "worldliness" is original material. As usual in Ellen White's publications, articles, letters, and other publications, much of the materials were republished in different formats. So, you get much repetition. Nevertheless, the number of times that the term appears can also show the topic's relevance.

understanding of such an important concept.

Even the massive work of the *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* does not include a specific entry on the topic of worldliness. The subject appears only associated with Emma Webber, a former worker of the Battle Creek Sanitarium. It mentions a letter sent to her by Ellen White in 1891. In this document, White rebuked her pride, worldliness, and danger of backsliding.⁷ A worldliness spirituality also appears in the *Encyclopedia* as a reason for the delay of the Second Coming and a cause for the eschatological shaking.⁸

In 2007, a doctoral dissertation defended in the South American Adventist Theological Seminary by Heraldo Vander Lopes about the concept of the Eschatological Shaking in the writings of Ellen G. White provided helpful insights into the role of worldliness as a cause for the end-time shaking. However, the subject of conformity to the world is only mentioned tangentially.⁹ Moreover, much has been written about the worries of secularization within the Adventist Church. Still, none pursued the development of the understanding of Ellen White regarding the dangers and concerns of a worldliness Christianity.¹⁰

⁷ CAMPBELL, Michael W. Webber, Emma (1856–1912). In: FORTIN, Denis; MOON, Jerry (Ed.). **The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013. p. 542. Ellen White seems to link Webber's worldliness with a cold heart and lack of piety. She needed to be less self-centered to reflect the character of Jesus. The letter number 7 from 1891 (manuscript 947) states: "You are not able to walk alone in the sparks of your own kindling, for if you do not place yourself under the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness that it may shine into your heart and expel all selfishness, all worldliness, you cannot be a light to the world. You are not cultivating piety and a meek and quiet spirit through the grace of Christ. You need to cultivate human sympathy and love. You are too cold, you hold yourself aloof from others, while circumstances and opportunities are granted you every day to represent the character of Jesus." See **Manuscript Releases [Nos. 921–999, 1982–1983]**. Vol. 12. Ellen G. White Estate, 1993, p. 104.

⁸ DOUGLASS, Herbert E. Second Coming of Christ, Delay Of. In: FORTIN, Denis; MOON, Jerry (Ed.). **The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013. p. 1142. COON, Roger W. Shaking. In: FORTIN, Denis; MOON, Jerry (Ed.). **The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013. p. 1158. Ellen White specifically associated worldliness as a cause for the delay of the Second Coming: "It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years". WHITE, Ellen G. **Manuscript 4**, 1883. This manuscript is published entirely in WHITE, Ellen G. **Selected Messages From the Writings of Ellen G. White**. Vol. 1. Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958, p. 59-73.

⁹ LOPES, Heraldo Vander. *The Concept of Eschatological Shaking in the Writings of Ellen G. White*. Seminário Adventista Latino-Americano de Teologia, 2007.

¹⁰ Roger Dudley in 1986 proposes an interesting analysis of the relationship between the Church and the World using Richard Niebuhr's typology with a Seventh-day Adventist perspective. Although outdated, he intends to propose a good way for the church to relate to the culture. Alberto R. Timm also provides helpful considerations about the divine accommodation and cultural contexts in inspired materials in an article published in 2008. It's also useful to mention the publication of Rick Ferret in *Ministry Magazine* bearing in mind the challenges of the Adventist identity in the 21st century. See DUDLEY, Roger L. **The World: Love it or Leave it**. Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1986. TIMM, Alberto R. Divine Accommodation and Cultural Conditioning of the Inspired Writings. **Journal of the Adventist Theological Society**, v. 19, n. 1/2, 2008. FERRET, Rick. Adventist Identity in a Changing World. **Ministry Magazine**, outubro 2002. Disponível em: <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2002/10/adventist-identity-in-a-changing-world.html>.

So, with the proposal to research the concept of worldliness in Ellen White's writings, the most natural way is to look extensively at the counsels and admonitions she wrote to the SDA movement. For instance, the most comprehensive publication of her messages to individuals and the church is the nine volumes series entitled *Testimonies for the Church*. These messages deal mainly "with principles of Christian living and the mission of the church."¹¹ Therefore, this article limits itself to researching the concept of worldliness within the nine volumes of the *Testimonies for the Church*.¹²

The Background of the Publication of *Testimonies for the Church*

The printing of the nine volumes of *Testimonies for the Church* has a long way until the fourth edition, published in 1948. The early ministry of Ellen White was marked by extensive traveling to give her message to the new Sabbatarian Adventists. However, as the movement grew, it "became increasingly difficult for her to reach all the scattered believers, and she began to write her messages."¹³ In November 1855, church leaders agreed to publish a 16-page pamphlet called *Testimony for the Church*.¹⁴

After the production of the first, the publication of other numbered pamphlets occurred regularly through the 1850s and 1860s.¹⁵ However, in 1864, by the time of the 10th *Testimony*, the previous editions were out of print. So, they reprinted the *Testimonies* as part of *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 4.¹⁶ Another nine pamphlets (numbers 11 to 19) of the

¹¹ FORTIN, Denis. *Testimonies for the Church*. In: FORTIN, Denis; MOON, Jerry (Ed.). **The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013. p. 1212.

¹² It should be clear that this is a study of the use and presence of the term "worldliness" and "conformity to the world" in the *Testimonies for the Church* of Ellen G. White. The concept of the worldliness is present in many places where Ellen G. White does not explicitly use the term itself, but we have abstained from exploring those cases.

¹³ FORTIN, Denis. *Testimonies for the Church*. In: FORTIN, Denis; MOON, Jerry (Ed.). **The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013. p. 1213.

¹⁴ FORTIN, Denis. *Testimonies for the Church*. In: FORTIN, Denis; MOON, Jerry (Ed.). **The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013. p. 1213. See WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Battle Creek, MI: Advent Review Office, 1855.

¹⁵ The years of publications of the first ten *Testimonies* are those: (1) 1855, (2) 1856, (3) and (4) 1857, (5) 1859, (6) 1861, (7) and (8) 1862, (9) 1863, (10) 1864. There is a useful table with the years of publications of each of *Testimony* in ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE. **Testimony Countdown: Guidebook to the Study of the Testimonies for the Church by Ellen G. White**. Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1969, p. 65.

¹⁶ This volume 4 of *Spiritual Gifts* comprehends the testimonies 1 to 10, except the number 4. In this edition at least three omissions were made from the original pamphlets: (1) matters of local nature, (2) matters of personal nature, (3) other testimonies which were repeated in other volumes. WHITE, Arthur L. **Messenger to the Remnant**. Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1969, p. 119. Ellen White wrote as an introduction of the last section of the *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 4: "during the last nine years, from 1855 to 1864, I have written ten small pamphlets, entitled, *Testimony for the Church*, which have been published and circulated among Seventh-day Adventists. The first edition of most of these pamphlets being

Testimonies appeared between 1865 and 1870.¹⁷ In 1871, James White gathered these 19 testimonies and printed three bound volumes because "the call of these testimonies was large."¹⁸ Other volumes published the *Testimonies* from 20 to 30 in different formats.¹⁹

Nevertheless, the presentation as we have it today began to take form with the decision of the General Conference of 1883 to print the first 30 testimonies in four volumes with a well-done edition requested by Ellen White.²⁰ The new edition of volumes 1 to 4 came out in 1885. In 1889, volume 5, containing testimonies from 31 to 33, was

exhausted, and there being an increasing demand for them, it has been thought best to re-print them, as given in the following pages, omitting local and personal matters, and giving those portions only which are of practical and general interest and importance. Most of Testimony number 4 may be found in the second volume of *Spiritual Gifts*, hence, it is omitted in this volume." WHITE, Ellen G. **Spiritual Gifts**. Vol. 4. Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1864, p. ii.

¹⁷ The year of publications of those numbers are 11, 12 and 13 in 1867; 14, 15 and 16 in 1868; 17 in 1869; 18 and 19 in 1870; 20 in 1871.

¹⁸ J WHITE, James. Preface. In: WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies to the Church**. Vol. 1. Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1871, p. 1. In this edition of 1871, all the testimonies were included without the omissions of the 1864 edition. The first 11 testimonies were in volume one, and testimonies 12 to 16 were in the other volume. The third volume came later in the same year with testimonies from 17 to 19.

¹⁹ The individual *Testimonies* pamphlets were published in the following order: 21 and 22 in 1872; 23 in 1873; 24 and 25 in 1875; 26 and 27 in 1876, 28 in 1879, 29 in 1880, 30 in 1881. By this time, they were also reunited in volumes. Testimonies numbers 17 to 22 were published in 1873 in the same volume. Testimonies numbers 23 to 25 also were aggregated and published in 1875. Testimonies numbers 26 to 28 were published in 1879. Testimony number 29 came out in one volume in 1880 and number 30 in another volume in 1881.

²⁰ FORTIN, Denis. Testimonies for the Church. In: FORTIN, Denis; MOON, Jerry (Ed.). **The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013. p. 1213. The General Conference of the SDA Church considered the *Testimonies* very valuable. In the session of October 14, 1878, was resolved to "place them [the *Testimonies*] in the library of each church, and in the hands of scattered brethren, and that they encourage the reading of them. And further, resolved, that where these works are used as above stated, we offer them at one-half the retail price." In the session of April 23, 1879, the committee appointed to "consider the subject of the republication of the *Testimonies* and the circulation of the writings of Sister White, would recommend that the testimonies be kept always in print." Also, in the meetings of November 25, 1879, was resolved "that we urge upon our ministers and tract societies the importance of making earnest efforts to extend the circulation of the volumes of the Spirit of Prophecy and the Testimonies to the Church among our own people, till these shall be in every family of believers." Finally, in the session of 1883, a new edition was proposed and voted: "some of the bound volumes of the *Testimonies to the Church* are out of print, so that full sets cannot be obtained at the Office; and whereas, there is a constant and urgent call for the re-printing of these volumes; therefore, resolved, that we recommend their re-publication in such a form as to make four volumes of seven or eight hundred pages each. Whereas, many of these testimonies were written under the most unfavorable circumstances, the writer being too heavily pressed with anxiety and labor to devote critical thought to the grammatical perfection of the writings, and they were printed in such haste as to allow these imperfections to pass uncorrected; and whereas, we believe the light given by God to his servants is by the enlightenment of the mind, thus imparting the thoughts, and not (except in rare cases) the very words in which the ideas should be expressed; therefore resolved, that in the re-publication of these volumes such verbal changes be made as to remove the above-named imperfections, as far as possible, without in any measure changing the thought; and, further resolved, that this body appoint a committee of five to take charge of the re-publication of these volumes according to the above preambles and resolutions." GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH. Transcription of minutes of GC sessions from 1863 to 1888. Disponível em: <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCSM/GCB1863-88.pdf>. Acesso em: 16 fev. 2023.

published.²¹ Volumes 6 (1900), 7 (1902), 8 (1904), and 9 (1909) appeared as complete volumes.²² Since then, the nine-volume series *Testimonies for the Church* became a comprehensive and authoritative message from Ellen White to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.²³

The concept of worldliness within the *Testimonies* uses the admonitions to the Laodicean church as a broad framework that comprehends the lukewarm condition of specific individuals, institutions, or moments of the Seventh-day Adventist movement. This framework comprises how she addresses the subject of a worldly lifestyle and functions as an organizational motif for this topic.²⁴ Additionally, her concept of worldliness can be categorized under three different emphases: (1) a harmful association with the world; (2) specific lifestyle issues like silly conversations, dressing, and actions; and (3) an unhealthy relationship with finances in the context of covetousness, pride, and selfishness. Furthermore, ways to solve this condition are frequently addressed in the *Testimonies*.

"A Peculiar People" - An Appeal to Separation and Uniqueness

Some crucial Adventist concepts, such as the fall of Babylon comprising an apostasy of Protestantism developed after the summer of 1843, such as the "shut-door" belief following the 1844 disappointment and the emphasis as being the eschatological remnant, gave the Sabbatarian Adventism a solid sense of separation from the secular culture.²⁵ The founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church "found an identity in their

²¹ The individual pamphlets were published in the following years: 31 and 32 in 1882; 33 in 1889.

²² In all, there are 37 testimonies. This edition volume 1 contains testimonies from 1 to 14 (originally published between 1855 and 1868 and a biographical sketch of Ellen White's life and ministry up to the death of James White in 1881. Volume 2 includes numbers 15 to 20 (published between 1868 and 1871); volume 3, numbers 21 to 25 (published between 1872 and 1875); and volume 4, numbers 26 to 30 (published between 1876 and 1881). Volume 5 appeared containing numbers 31, 32, and 33 in 1889. Volumes 6 (1900), 7 (1902), 8 (1904), and 9 (1909) contain only one testimony each. See FORTIN, Denis. *Testimonies for the Church*. In: FORTIN, Denis; MOON, Jerry (Ed.). **The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013. p. 1214.

²³ Usually, the quotes are from the 1948 edition, since the text is much like the previous editions published when Ellen G. White was alive. "The paging of this, the fourth edition, conforms to that of the preceding edition in use for so many years... The messages in this new reset edition are reproduced without change or editing, except for such slight adjustments as were necessary to make the new printing conform to current forms of spelling, grammar, and punctuation. There have been no additions or deletions." THE TRUSTEES OF THE ELLEN G. WHITE PUBLICATIONS. Preface to Fourth Edition. In: WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948, p. 2.

²⁴ Felix A. Lorenz presents an insightful study about the Laodicean message in the writings of Ellen White in LORENZ, Felix A. **The Only Hope**. Ringgold, GA: Teach Services, 2003.

²⁵ Stephan Höschele presents a very solid study in the development of the conception of remnant in early Adventism on HÖSCHELE, Stephan. *The Remnant Concept in Early Adventism: From Apocalyptic*

isolation from the 'wicked world,' the fallen ecclesiastical institutions, and the larger Millerite/Adventist body that had rejected the prophetic significance of the October 1844 timing."²⁶

Although the first *Testimony* appeared only in 1855, five years before the initial steps in establishing an organizational system and with a more mature concept about the shut door and the remnant, there was still a clear emphasis and a heartfelt appeal from Ellen G. White to the incipient church to the dangers of "conforming themselves to the world."²⁷ With the apparent delay in the Second Coming and the accession to the church with many who have not been in the Millerite movement, the first *Testimonies* were given as a warning of the loss of that first love and a calling for a deeper consecration.²⁸

In *Testimony 7*, published in 1862, Ellen G. White told her readers that "from the beginning, Christ has chosen His people out of world and required them to be separate, having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."²⁹ She also recalls the biblical warnings to Israel in Ezra 9:1, 3-15; 2 Chronicles 36:14-16; Leviticus 18:26-27; Deuteronomy 32:16-22 as solid examples of the need for disconnection from the wicked world.³⁰ Furthermore, she responded to the criticism of being too exclusive: "As a people, we would make any sacrifice to save souls, or lead them to the truth. But to unite with them, to love the things that they love, and have friendship with the world, we dare not, for we should then be at enmity with God."³¹

Antisectarianism to an Eschatological Denominational Ecclesiology. **Andrews University Seminary Studies**, v. 51, n. 2, 2013.

²⁶ KAISER, Denis. A Sense of Belonging: The Adventist Journey Home. In: CONFERENCE ON ADVENTIST IDENTITY, Andrews University, outubro 2022. The way they referred to themselves in the early years of the denomination also suggests a sense of separation from other Christian movements and the prominent American culture of that time: (1) saints, (2) remnant, (2) advent believers, (3) the scattered/little flock, (4) a company, (5) a band, (6) God's people, (7) (true) children of God, (8) the true Israel of God, (9) the saints, (10) brethren, and (11) God's peculiar people. HÖSCHELE, Stephan. The Remnant Concept in Early Adventism: From Apocalyptic Antisectarianism to an Eschatological Denominational Ecclesiology. **Andrews University Seminary Studies**, v. 51, n. 2, 2013, p. 279.

²⁷ Höschele identifies in Ellen White's earliest publication entitled *To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad* (1846) an incipient ecclesiology and a tripartite scheme about the way she presents "the Advent people, the church, and the world." There is an indication of the view that the "Advent people" (i.e., the "remnant") were those few who would remain faithful until the end, as opposed to "the church" and "the world.". See Höschele 279. Additionally, Douglas Morgan's doctoral dissertation analyses the civil and prophetic relationship between the Adventist movement and the American Republic. He also identifies the first period of an emphasis on separation: "remnant vs republic (1844-1861)." See MORGAN, Douglas. **Adventism and the American Republic**. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001, p. 11-29.

²⁸ THE TRUSTEES OF THE ELLEN G. WHITE PUBLICATIONS. The Background of Volume One. In: WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948, p. 6.

²⁹ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948, p. 279.

³⁰ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948, p. 280.

³¹ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing

Not so many years later, Ellen White also adverted in *Testimony* 16 that many of the professed people of God are "so conformed to the world that their peculiar character is not discerned, and it is difficult to distinguish 'between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not.' God would do great things for His people if they would come out from the world and be separate."³² This emphasis on separation endures and appears also much later, as in *Testimony* 35 (1902) as she calls for greater humility and "distinction from the world, among Seventh-day Adventists."³³

In these constant appeals for disassociation from the 19th-century American secular culture and its religious milieu, there is a frequent emphasis on preparing a people for the Second Coming. So, this separation from the world is not monastic, focused on spiritual discipline, but a complete devotion to the Adventist message in the context of devising Jesus' return. In this context, she adverted in *Testimony* 16 that "while worldlings are all earnestness and ambition to secure earthly treasure, God's people are not conformed to the world, but show by their earnest, watching, waiting position that they are transformed; that their home is not in this world, but that they are seeking a better country, even a heavenly."³⁴

Indeed, the separation from the world she proposed did not mean isolation. Still, it designates a careful way of living and an intentional association to reach those who have yet to know the Adventist message. Moreover, from a missiological point of view, although some accommodation is needed, this does not mean a complete identification with the present culture to reach those outside the church. In *Testimony* 35, Ellen White presents this principle in a clear statement:

"We cannot serve God and the world at the same time. We must not center our affections on worldly relatives, who have no desire to learn the truth. We may seek in every way, while associated with them, to let our light shine; but our words, our deportment, our customs and practices, should not in any sense be molded by their ideas and customs."³⁵

Association, 1948, p. 282.

³² WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 2. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948, p. 128.

³³ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 7. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948, p. 296–297.

³⁴ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:194. She concludes in this context that "God designs that His people shall fix their eyes heavenward, looking for the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:194.

³⁵ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 5. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948, p. 543. In *Testimony* 30, about the topic of dress, she also remarks on the importance of peculiarity: "many dresses like the world in order to have an influence over unbelievers, but here they make a sad mistake. If they would have a true and saving influence, let them live out their profession, show their faith by their righteous works, and make the distinction plain between the Christian and the worldling." WHITE, Ellen G.

The first 30 testimonies were more specific and frequently addressed people, families, or small communities.³⁶ As the years passed, especially with Testimonies vols. 4 and 5, the focus shifted to the community in Battle Creek and the first institutions of the church. In 1855, Battle Creek was chosen as the home for the publishing house, the same year that *Testimony* 1 was published. Over the years, the city became the headquarters for the Seventh-day Adventists and enjoyed a significant concentration of believers.³⁷

An Appeal to Uniqueness Regarding Church Institutions

Testimony 29 was addressed to the Seventh-day Adventist community in Battle Creek, and Ellen White rebuked them, using powerful language, of not living up to the position as a peculiar people:

"The barriers which God's word places about His people are being broken down. Men who are acquainted with the way in which God has led His people in the past, instead of inquiring for the old paths and defending our position as a peculiar people, have linked hands with the world. The most alarming feature in the case is that warning voices have not been heard in remonstrance, entreaties, and warnings. The eyes of God's people seem to be blinded, while the church is

Testimonies for the Church. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948, p. 634. In *Testimony* 37, published in 1909, in the same context of reaching the non-believers, Ellen White called for a clear separation: "The line of demarcation between those who keep the commandments of God and those who do not is to be revealed with unmistakable clearness." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church.** Vol. 9. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948, p. 251 The well-known quote in *The Great Controversy* exemplifies this principle: "Conformity to worldly customs converts the church to the world; it never converts the world to Christ. Familiarity with sin will inevitably cause it to appear less repulsive. He who chooses to associate with the servants of Satan will soon cease to fear their master." WHITE, Ellen G. **The Great Controversy.** Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911. p. 509. Ellen White had a balanced and practical view of the relationship with nonbelievers. She proposed Christ as the model of not conforming to the world yet being concerned with people's needs: "Christ carried out in His life His own divine teachings. His zeal never led Him to become passionate. He manifested consistency without obstinacy, benevolence without weakness, tenderness and sympathy without sentimentalism. He was highly social; yet He possessed a reserved dignity that did not encourage undue familiarity. His temperance never led to bigotry or austerity. He was not conformed to this world; yet He was not indifferent to the wants of the least among men. He was awake to the needs of all." WHITE, Ellen G. **Manuscript 132**, 1902.

³⁶ There are plenty of examples of visions and messages that Ellen White claimed to be received from God to specific persons or families regarding their worldliness. On December 10, 1871, she received a message concerning a family and the dangerous association with unholy activities. See, for example, WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church.** Vol. 3. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948, p. 40-41

³⁷ The Village of Battle Creek was chartered in 1850 with a population of 1,050; by 1860, the population was 3,508. In 1855, when James and Ellen White moved there, the city had only 14 Adventists, but by 1900 the congregation numbered more than 1,000 members. HICKERSON, Stanley D. Battle Creek, Michigan. In: FORTIN, Denis; MOON, Jerry (Ed.). **The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia.** Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013. p. 634.

fast drifting into the channel of worldliness."³⁸

As mentioned, the emphasis in the later *Testimonies* is more on the institutions than on particular people. Ellen White stressed later, in her *Testimony* 34 (1900), the importance of the Adventists Schools following a different pattern from the secular institutions. She was in Australia when she penned this sixth volume. Although she exalted the school of Avondale as a model to be followed,³⁹ she also worried about some educational institutions, especially in America, that were lowering the moral standards in searching for popularity.⁴⁰ Her counsel was straightforward against to maintain the standard for popularity as numbers were not necessarily evidence of success. The school should aim for virtue, intelligence, and piety and not be converted to the fashions of the world.⁴¹

Underlining the significance of uniqueness and separating from secular culture, Ellen White also adverted the church publishing houses that "our publishing work... was designed to accomplish a specific purpose. Seventh-day Adventists have been chosen by God as a peculiar people, separate from the world... called them to be ambassadors for Him in the last work of salvation."⁴² At the turn of the 20th century, some Review and Herald, and Pacific Press machinery were not used full-time. Both institutions started printing commercial material so they could maintain the plants and the staff on a sound basis.⁴³

However, this printed secular material was very profitable; it aroused several

³⁸ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948. p. 513 In this very *Testimony*, she rebukes some of the members of being dishonest with others that came from abroad: "Some who have located in Battle Creek in order to have a more favorable opportunity to benefit themselves, are guilty of selfishness and even fraud in dealing with our brethren who have come from abroad," WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948. p. 512

³⁹ WHITE, Ellen G. **Manuscript** 186, 1898.

⁴⁰ A PhD dissertation thesis by Milton Hook analyses the Avondale Collage as an example to the Adventists School system. See HOOK, Milton Raymond. *The Avondale School and Adventist Educational Goals, 1394-1900*. Andrews University, 1978.

⁴¹ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 6. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 143. She was very clear that the Seventh-day Adventists schools and colleges must endure a different model than the other secular institutions: "Many teachers permit their minds to take too narrow and low a range. They do not keep the divine plan ever in view, but are fixing their eyes upon worldly models. Look up, 'where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God,' and then labor that your pupils may be conformed to His perfect character. Point the youth to Peter's ladder of eight rounds, and place their feet, not on the highest round, but on the lowest, and with earnest solicitation urge them to climb to the very top." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 6. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 147

⁴² WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 7. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948. p. 138

⁴³ THE TRUSTEES OF THE ELLEN G. WHITE PUBLICATIONS. *The Times of Volume 7*. In: WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 7. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948, p. 6

problems. Section four of *Testimony* 35 (1902) addressed this matter beyond other issues. Ellen White was very balanced and cautioned in saying that it was unnecessary to divorce the commercial work from the publishing houses entirely, "for this would close the door against rays of light that should be given to the world."⁴⁴ However, this material should be carefully selected to not "interfere with the spirituality of the institution." They must "build up the work that represents the truth."⁴⁵

In general lines, she urged the publishing houses to present their labor in distinctive lines:

"God has ordained that His work shall be presented to the world in distinct, holy lines. He desires His people to show by their lives the advantage of Christianity over worldliness. By His grace every provision has been made for us in all our transaction of business to demonstrate the superiority of Heaven's principles over the principles of the world. We are to show that we are working upon a higher plane than that of worldlings."⁴⁶

The same attention was given to the health institutes, especially the Battle Creek Sanitarium. In the 1870s, by the times of *Testimony* 27 to 30, Ellen White was a leading speaker in many American temperance meeting associations. However, she stressed the peculiar purposes of the church's health institutions. She penned that the success of the sanitarium depended upon it maintaining the simplicity of godliness and "shunning the world's follies in eating, drinking, dressing, and amusements." It must be "reformatory in all its principles."⁴⁷ She warned that the "religious element" must prevail: "Let not our health asylum be perverted to the service of worldliness and fashion."⁴⁸

The Lukewarm Condition Motif in the Context of Separation from the World

Equally important is to note that around April of 1857, with the publication of the third *Testimony*, Ellen White's applied to the Sabbatarian movement the lukewarm

⁴⁴ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 7. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948. p. 163

⁴⁵ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 7. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948. p. 163

⁴⁶ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 7. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948. p. 142

⁴⁷ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948. p. 586

⁴⁸ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948. p. 586. She completed: "Let religious principles be made prominent and kept so; let pride and popularity be discarded; let simplicity and plainness, kindness and faithfulness, be seen everywhere; then the sanitarium will be just what God intended it should be; then the Lord will favor it." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948. p. 587

condition of Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22).⁴⁹ Formerly, this condition was understood to apply to the Advent believers who had not followed in the new light of the third angel and who had organized themselves into another church, bitterly opposing the Sabbath truth.⁵⁰ Therefore, the message to Laodicea in the *Testimonies* inaugurated this new set of counsels and warnings to the church in the context of the appeals of the True Witness (Rev. 3:14,18-20).⁵¹

In *Testimony 5* (1859), Ellen White again applied the lukewarm condition to the sabbath-keepers saying that "the testimony to the Laodiceans applies to God's people at the present time."⁵² She proposes that they achieved this lukewarmness because of their (1) hardness of heart, (2) backsliding, and (3) imitation of the fashions of this world.⁵³ Later, in 1882, she also included in this spiritual warmness the love of Mammon, as those who had "great light, great opportunities, and every spiritual advantage" but "praise Christ and the world with the same breath."⁵⁴

The Laodicean message will function as the central motif for Ellen White's message to the Seventh-day Adventist church regarding the problem of worldliness, backsliding, and conformation to the present culture. The warnings of the lukewarm state are related to a worldliness condition in almost every case. As seen by Ellen White, this

⁴⁹ She wrote: "the Lord has shown me in vision some things concerning the church in its present lukewarm state, which I will relate to you. The church was presented before me in vision. Said the angel to the church: 'Jesus speaks to thee, 'Be zealous and repent.'" This work, I saw, should be taken hold of in earnest. There is something to repent of. Worldly-mindedness, selfishness, and covetousness have been eating out the spirituality and life of God's people". WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 141

⁵⁰ THE TRUSTEES OF THE ELLEN G. WHITE PUBLICATIONS. The Background of Volume One. In: WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948. p. 6.

⁵¹ In 1856, James White began a series of editorials in the *Review and Herald* arguing from Scripture that the Laodicea's lukewarm condition should be applied to the sabbath-keeping Adventists. Instead of saying the Lukewarm condition Laodicea were those who did not accept the message of the soon return of Jesus as did the Millerites, he now proposed that the nominal churches and the other Adventists are cold, so the lukewarm condition represents the sabbath-keepers. WHITE, James. Watchman, What of the Night? **Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald**, 9 out. 1856, p. 184. Ellen White was in full agreement, and many others sent to the *Review* letters in acceptance of this message. See also MOON, Jerry. The Laodicean Message. In: FORTIN, Denis; MOON, Jerry (Ed.). **The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013. p. 924-925.

⁵² WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 186.

⁵³ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 186-188.

⁵⁴ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 5. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 77. She's rebuking the lack of full commitment to the religion of Christ and a divided way of living the religion: "many of our people are lukewarm. They occupy the position of Meroz, neither for nor against, neither cold nor hot. They hear the words of Christ, but do them not. If they remain in this state, He will reject them with abhorrence... They make merry with the children of the world, and yet claim to be blessed with the children of God." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 5. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 76-77.

will be even clearer as we move forward to the following two categories of conformity to the world.

"Dress, Conversation and Actions" - Lifestyle-related Issues

The 19th century in the United States was marked by intense transformation as America underwent the most fundamental changes of its history in the last half of the nineteenth century.⁵⁵ They were growing as a nation, conquering the West and with population figures bounding upward. All this variation promoted drastic transformations in the American way of life. On the one hand, temperance reform was becoming more popular; on the other, popular amusements (theatre, circus, and sporting), especially after the civil war, became part of American life as never before.⁵⁶ At this time, pulp fiction novels also became very well-received.⁵⁷ All that affected the yet little Adventist Sabbatarian movement.

In the first *Testimony*, Ellen White mentioned a vision of an angel with "scales in his hands weighing the thoughts and interest of the people of God, especially the young." On the one hand, he weighed the heavenly thoughts; on the other, the thoughts and interests tending to the Earth. These thoughts included reading storybooks, ideas of dress, vanity, and pride. Unfortunately, "the scale filled with thoughts of earth, vanity, and pride quickly went down, notwithstanding weight after weight rolled from the scale." She recalls it as a solemn moment and concludes that "unless they speedily repent, they will perish."⁵⁸

Not much later, in May 1856, Ellen White also wrote down an analog vision correlating the tied-up resemblance between the so-called people of God and the cultural milieu of that time. This vision, named the Two-Way Vision (Matthew 7:13-14), is longer than the former. She heard the angel saying to "strive to enter in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and

⁵⁵ McARTHUR, Benjamin. Amusing the Masses. In: LAND, Gary (ed.). **The World of Ellen G. White**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1987. p. 177.

⁵⁶ McARTHUR, Benjamin. Amusing the Masses. In: LAND, Gary (ed.). **The World of Ellen G. White**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1987. p. 177.

⁵⁷ For a description of the American literature of the 19th century see DAVIS, Delmer. Literature for the Nation. In: LAND, Gary (ed.). **The World of Ellen G. White**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1987. p. 193-208.

⁵⁸ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 124-125.

few there be that find it."⁵⁹

What she saw was an interesting paradox. She recalled: "I saw many traveling in this broad road who had the words written upon them: 'Dead to the world. The end of all things is at hand. Be ye also ready.'" Strangely, "they looked just like all the vain ones around them.... Their conversation was just like that of the gay, thoughtless ones around them; but they would occasionally point with great satisfaction to the letters on their garments, calling for the others to have the same upon theirs." They profess to be true believers in the narrow way, but because of their worldliness, they were in the wide one. There was no distinction between these weak believers and the others on the wide road since they were alike; dressed, talked, and acted alike.⁶⁰

The message in both visions is clear. There was an unhealthy association between the believers and earthly affairs, and she rebuked this lifestyle.⁶¹ This backsliding was a loss of consecration formerly present in the Adventists of 1843 and 1844 but, for worldly reasons, vanished away. She asked: "what has come over the professed peculiar people of God? I saw the conformity to the world, the unwillingness to suffer for the truth's sake. I saw a great lack of submission to the will of God."⁶²

Again, these intense appeals were in the context of preparing themselves for the second coming. As time passed, the fervor and expectancy of Jesus' return faded, and Ellen White urged the believers to "a deep and living experience."⁶³ Even decades later, in *Testimony* 37 (1909), she retained the same perspective, appealing to readiness in the Second Coming: "those who have given God only halfhearted service, allowing their lives to be conformed to the ways and practices of the world, will hear the sad words: 'Depart from Me; I know you not.'"⁶⁴

⁵⁹ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 127.

⁶⁰ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 128.

⁶¹ In some ways, Ellen White understood the shape of the Adventist's Sabbath-keepers as worse than the Israelites murmuring in the desert because of the new light that the movement received was so much greater. "I saw that many who profess to believe the truth for these last days think it strange that the children of Israel murmured as they journeyed; that after the wonderful dealings of God with them, they should be so ungrateful as to forget what He had done for them. Said the angel: 'Ye have done worse than they.' I saw that God has given His servants the truth so clear, so plain, that it cannot be resisted." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 129.

⁶² WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 128.

⁶³ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 125.

⁶⁴ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 9. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 252.

In the early testimonies, Ellen White frequently used a combination of three words to refer to a worldliness lifestyle: dress, conversation, and actions. Later, she added unbelief to this trilogy.⁶⁵ This shows how the *Testimonies* emphasize a way of life not aligned with the prevailing culture but with the remnant message. Dressing and fashion are two concepts remarkably mentioned throughout the *Testimonies*, more frequent and specific in the first four volumes but still appearing in more general terms in the later ones.

The Issue of the Clothing Reform

The issue of how-to dress is approached in at least three different emphases: (1) frivolity, (2) pride in contrast to simplicity, and (3) health reform. In the first and second volumes, the emphasis is more on the silliness and loss of time facing the imminent eternity.⁶⁶ In connection with the previous concept of separation from the world, Ellen White urged the so-called remnant to dress peculiarly.⁶⁷ In several volumes, she also pleaded for a simple choice in dressing and not spending much time or money on fashion because giving space to pride is to be conformed to the world.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ For example: "they think they are not like the world, but they are so near like them in dress, in conversation, and actions, that there is no distinction. I saw them decorating their poor, mortal bodies, which are liable at any moment to be touched by the finger of God and laid upon a bed of anguish... I saw that the words, the dress, and actions should tell for God". WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 131. "The unbelief, pride, covetousness, and love of the world, which have existed in the hearts of God's professed people, have grieved the sinless angels". WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 2. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 125. "Many dress like the world in order to have an influence over unbelievers, but here they make a sad mistake. If they would have a true and saving influence, let them live out their profession, show their faith by their righteous works, and make the distinction plain between the Christian and the worldling. The words, the dress, the actions, should tell for God." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 634.

⁶⁶ "I saw that some professed Sabbath keepers spend hours that are worse than thrown away, in studying this or that fashion to decorate the poor, mortal body. While you make yourselves appear like the world, and as beautiful as you can, remember that the same body may in a few days be food for worms. And while you adorn it to your taste, to please the eye, you are dying spiritually" WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 184.

⁶⁷ "I was shown that the people of God should not imitate the fashions of the world. Some have done this, and are fast losing the peculiar, holy character which should distinguish them as God's people... If God's professed people had not greatly departed from Him, there would now be a marked difference between their dress and that of the world... The inhabitants of earth are growing more and more corrupt, and the line of distinction between them and the Israel of God must be more plain, or the curse which falls upon worldlings will fall on God's professed people." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 188-189.

⁶⁸ "God works by simple means to separate and distinguish His children from the world; but some have so departed from the simplicity of the work and ways of God that they are above the work, not in it." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 524. See also WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific

Over and above that, with the background of the health vision of 1863, many *Testimonies* urged reform in dressing. "The typical dress worn by American women during this period was characterized by long, trailing skirts that literally swept the streets, tightly fitting corsets, and multiple layers of petticoats under the skirt and on top of a large hoop."⁶⁹ Her first warning was regarding the use of hoops. It appeared in the *Review* in 1861,⁷⁰ and also in *Testimony 5* she argues that "hoops are a shame."⁷¹ Later, a particular Adventist dress reform was developed prioritizing health: "If the world introduce a modest, convenient, and healthful mode of dress, which is in accordance with the Bible, it will not change our relation to God or to the world to adopt such a style of dress."⁷²

This reform in dressing should also be a barrier to "prevent the hearts of our sisters from becoming alienated from Him by following the fashions of the world."⁷³ As the years passed, she mentioned the dress reform less and less, stating more broad counsels. Denis Fortin remembers that "Ellen White encountered many unpleasant experiences that eventually led her to lay aside the promotion of this entire issue."⁷⁴ The counsels became

Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 628,633-634. WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 9. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 131.

⁶⁹ FORTIN, Denis. Dress Reform. In: SCHWARZ, Richard W.; GREENLEAF, Floyd (eds.). **The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013. p. 786.

⁷⁰ "Those among Sabbath-keepers who have been unwilling to make any sacrifice, but have yielded to the influence of the world, are to be tested and proved... Hoops, I was shown, were an abomination, and every Sabbath-keeper's influence should be a rebuke to this ridiculous fashion, which has been a screen to iniquity." WHITE, Ellen G. *Perilous Times*. **Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald**, August 27, 1861, p. 101. This same text was also published in *Testimony 7*: WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 270.

⁷¹ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 189. In the 1850s, a reform dress called American Costume was becoming more popular, consisting of a short skirt and long, loose trousers worn under the skirt. The fact that spiritualists were among the advocates of the dress reform inhibited Adventists from readily accepting this American costume. Ellen White did not approve this kind of reform for at least two reasons: (1) too short and masculine, (2) could cripple the influence among unbelievers. WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 421. See also: FORTIN, Denis. Dress Reform. In: SCHWARZ, Richard W.; GREENLEAF, Floyd (eds.). **The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013. p. 787.

⁷² WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 458-459. In *Testimony 11*, she presents her *Modus Operandi* in addressing the topic of dressing: "when I visit a place to speak to the people where the subject is new and prejudice exists, I think it best to be careful and not close the ears of the people by wearing a dress which would be objectionable to them. But after bringing the subject before them and fully explaining my position, I then appear before them in the reform dress, illustrative of my teachings." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 465.

⁷³ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 639.

⁷⁴ Denis points out that: "First came the question of how long, or how short, the dress should be. Many intimated from her estimate that a dress "should be from four to six inches [10 to 15 centimeters] shorter than now worn" (i.e., about nine inches [23 centimeters] from the floor) to be a direct revelation from God and, therefore, the divinely revealed length of a woman's dress. Any departure from this length was considered a transgression of God's will. However, Ellen White explained that the exact length of the skirt had not been revealed to her in vision and that she had estimated the approximate length... Furthermore,

more focused on the importance of plainness and simplicity. To her, to give too much attention to fashion and dressing is to be "of the world."⁷⁵

As the church institutions became the focus of the later *Testimonies*, some relevant counsels appeared on the issue of dress. She is always appealing to simplicity, avoiding vanity, pride, and unnecessary spending:

"Our medical workers should never entertain the idea that it is essential to make an appearance of being wealthy. There will be a strong temptation to do this with the thought that it will give influence. But I am instructed to say that it will have the opposite effect. All who seek to uplift themselves by conforming to the world set an example that is misleading. God recognizes as His those only who practice the self-denial and sacrifice which He has enjoined. The style of a physician's dress, his equipage, his furniture, count not one jot with God. He cannot work by His Holy Spirit with those who try to compete with the world in dress and display."⁷⁶

The Lukewarm Condition Motif in the Context of Lifestyle Issues

The lifestyle issues related to some cultural matters were also presented using Laodicea's message as a framework comprising all sorts of conformity to the world. The lukewarm condition was frequently defined by worldliness. In this context, another subject of Ellen White's concern was bad conversations, especially those focused on other people's sins and problems. One of her most potent rebukes was published in *Testimony*

she explained that "some have supposed that the very pattern given was the pattern that all were to adopt. This is not so. But something as simple as this would be the best we could adopt under the circumstances." FORTIN, Denis. Dress Reform. In: SCHWARZ, Richard W.; GREENLEAF, Floyd (Eds.). **The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013. p. 787. In *Testimony* 11, she recalled some of the confusion on this topic: "My apology for calling your attention again to the subject of dress is that some do not seem to understand what I have before written; and an effort is made, perhaps by those who do not wish to believe what I have written, to make confusion in our churches upon this important subject." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 456.

⁷⁵ In any way, the topic of dressing was understood by Ellen White as less important, but a less specific approach was adopted. To show the relevance of this topic, in *Testimony* 34 published in 1900, she urged the necessity to counsel the new converters about the dressing: "Bring the requirements of the gospel to bear upon the candidates for baptism... One of the points upon which those newly come to the faith will need instruction is the subject of dress. Let the new converts be faithfully dealt with. Are they vain in dress? Do they cherish pride of heart? The idolatry of dress is a moral disease. It must not be taken over into the new life. In most cases, submission to the gospel requirements will demand a decided change in the dress." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 6. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 95-96.

⁷⁶ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 6. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 251.

3 (1857), accusing those so critical that they would find fault in Jesus himself. Those people had "rolled the world before the door of their heart, which bars the door" from Jesus opening it (Rev. 3:20).⁷⁷

It was also a lukewarm condition to imitate the fashions of the world, losing the holy character.⁷⁸ She also called for separation from mundane dressing, marking a clear difference from others:

"I was shown that the testimony to the Laodiceans applies to God's people at the present time, and the reason it has not accomplished a greater work is because of the hardness of their heart...If God's professed people had not greatly departed from Him, there would now be a marked difference between their dress and that of the world... The inhabitants of earth are growing more and more corrupt, and the line of distinction between them and the Israel of God must be more plain, or the curse which falls upon worldlings will fall on God's professed people."⁷⁹

In addition, she depicts a scene of church members not opening their hearts doors fully to the True Witness because some "world's rubbish" was in the way. Jesus "waited at your doors for admittance;" but they "did not throw them open wide and welcome Him in." Some opened the door slightly and permitted a little light from His presence to enter but "did not welcome the heavenly Visitor." The problems were that "there was not room for Jesus. The place which should have been reserved for Him was occupied with other things."⁸⁰

In effect, Ellen White addressed the Adventist people in a transforming American society throughout the *Testimonies*. She had a clear emphasis on lifestyle matters such as (1) frivolous thoughts, (2) literature, (3) fashion and dressing, and (4) silly conversations. She eventually also talked about amusements but more tangentially.⁸¹ The first

⁷⁷ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 143,145. The 1871 version of Volume 1 of the *Testimonies* entitles this section about Laodicea as "worldliness". The edition of 1885 and 1948 entitle this section as "be zealous and repent". See WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies to the Church**, vol. 1. Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1871. p. 48-57.

⁷⁸ "I was shown that the people of God should not imitate the fashions of the world. Some have done this, and are fast losing the peculiar, holy character which should distinguish them as God's people" WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 188.

⁷⁹ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 186, 189.

⁸⁰ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 2. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 216-217.

⁸¹ She referred to a new situation in Battle Creek Sanitarium when doctors were using secular entertainment with patients: "as soon as it was known that the physicians at the Institute had recommended plays and

Testimonies were more vocal in these subjects as the later ones were more general and focused more on urging for simplicity. Also, in applying the Laodicean message to the believers, she identified these points as a lukewarm condition. Another primary concern of the worldlines within the Seventh-day Adventist church presented by Ellen White was the relation with finances in the context of selfishness, pride, and courteousness.

"The Spirit of this World" - Worldliness in the Context of Financial Affairs

Putting aside that the "good old days" were not so good, except for some privileged men,⁸² the United States was growing as a nation. The progress was evident in areas of technology, industrialization, and urbanization. The government was united and achieved a continental territory. The Seventh-day Adventist church grew with new institutions, many more church members, and missionary posts in other countries. Even the Whites, as the *Testimonies* were being published, passed from a poverty status to a more comfortable situation thanks to James White's entrepreneurial efforts and the royalties of her books.⁸³

In this circumstance of relative progress, Ellen White was very vocal in rebuking what she identified as the "spirit of this world." She understood this expression as "vanity, pride, and selfishness,"⁸⁴ a clear-cut contrast with simplicity. She viewed God's people as "partaking of the spirit of the world, imitating its fashions, and getting above the simplicity of our faith."⁸⁵ In her opinion, Jesus is the perfect example of simplicity and a

amusements in order to divert the minds of the patients from themselves into a more cheerful train of thought, it went like fire in the stubble; the young in — and other churches thought that they had need of just such things, and the armor of righteousness was laid off by many. As they were no longer held in by bit and bridle, they engaged in these things with as much earnestness and perseverance as though everlasting life depended upon their zeal in this direction." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 2. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 137.

⁸² Otto Bettmann presented in a very pictorial way the harsh reality of the three decades after the American Civil War. BETTMANN, Otto L. **The Good Old Days - They Were Terrible**. New York, NY: Random House, 1974.

⁸³ THOMPSON, Alden. Ellen G. White's Financed. In: FORTIN, Denis; MOON, Jerry (Eds.). **The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013. p. 819.

⁸⁴ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 591.

⁸⁵ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 140. She added: "When the truth in its simplicity and strength prevails among believers, and is brought to bear against the spirit of the world, it will be evident that there is no concord between Christ and Belial. The disciples of Christ must be living examples of the life and spirit of their Master." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 407-408.

model against the "spirit of the world" as Jesus' simplicity and strength "brought to bear against the spirit of the world, condemning its exciting pleasures and corrupting charms."⁸⁶

Many of God's blessings concerning this life could become curses with the "spirit of this world" nourished in the heart. Counseling believers in a particular region in 1881, she warned them of "becoming drunken with the spirit of the world" because some of them were "surfeited with the cares of this life." She continues that "self-will, self-interest, envy, and pride shut out the presence of God" and was "not safe to indulge in vanity and pride, or love of power or gain." That was why Adventist people have no more power, as "they profess the truth, but do not practice it."⁸⁷

Accordingly, God-given talents and blessings should not be devoted to secular activities. Ellen White urged that "one great cause of weakness in the — church has been that, instead of improving their talents to the glory of God, they have wrapped them in a napkin and buried them in the world." This burial relates to loving the secular more than the spiritual and prioritizing what is temporal. She appealed to this local church to repent "from their lethargy" and to "shake off the spirit of the world." In conclusion, she attested that "the Lord sometimes tests His people with prosperity in temporal things. But He intends that they shall make a right use of His gifts."⁸⁸

An analog concept is what she understood as "love of the world." It should also be perceived materially. She attested that "covetousness, selfishness, love of money, and love of the world are all through the ranks of Sabbath keepers. These evils are destroying the spirit of sacrifice among God's people."⁸⁹ It was also a purpose of the third angel's message to work "like leaven upon many hearts that profess to believe it," and purge away "pride, selfishness, covetousness, and love of the world."⁹⁰

⁸⁶ WHITE, Ellen G. *Testimonies for the Church*. Vol. 2. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 344. Even ministries were warned by Ellen White of the dangers of having the "spirit of the World:" "As their worldly treasure increased, they became less devotional... Terrible deception! Satan looks on and laughs for he knows that they are selling soul and body through their lust for gain. They are continually making flimsy excuses for thus selling themselves for gain... The spirit of the world has taken possession of them, and they are brought into captivity by the powers of darkness." WHITE, Ellen G. *Testimonies for the Church*. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 476-479.

⁸⁷ WHITE, Ellen G. *Testimonies for the Church*. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 609, 610, 613.

⁸⁸ WHITE, Ellen G. *Testimonies for the Church*. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 619.

⁸⁹ WHITE, Ellen G. *Testimonies for the Church*. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 140.

⁹⁰ WHITE, Ellen G. *Testimonies for the Church*. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 132-133.

Besides both concepts, "spirit of the world" and "love of the world," the deleterious relationship with money is conceived by her as idolatry. Writing a testimony to a church member, identified as Brother I., she alerted him that "this world is his god" because "he worships money."⁹¹ Moreover, working in excess to fulfill personal ambitions was also loving the world. She reproved a so-called brother E in *Testimony 26* for "have made a great mistake in giving this world" his ambition. He was exacting and sometimes impatient and required too much of his son. "At your house it has been work, work, work, from early morning until night."⁹²

Considering her personal life and many other publications, Ellen White did not advocate living in complete poverty or an unnecessarily simple life.⁹³ She was not radical in her principles regarding money; nevertheless, in *Testimony 4*, Ellen White presented the principle that having possessions is not a sin unless someone retained what could be used for the cause of God:

"I saw that if, in the providence of God, wealth has been acquired, there is no sin in possessing it; and if no opportunities present themselves to use this means to advance the cause of God, there is no sin in still possessing it. But if opportunities are presented to the brethren to use their property to the glory of God and the advancement of His cause, and they withhold it, it will be a cause of stumbling to them."⁹⁴

⁹¹ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 2. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 237. She also WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 2. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 238.

⁹² WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 48. This brother E, accordingly, with Ellen White, was "enshrouded in darkness" as the love of the world had taken entire control of his being. She counseled him: "In the wilderness of temptation Christ met the great leading temptations that would assail man. There He encountered, singlehanded, the wily, subtle foe, and overcame him. The first great temptation was upon appetite; the second, presumption; the third, love of the world. Satan has overcome his millions by tempting them to the indulgence of appetite... Satan has better success in approaching man. All this money, this gain, this land, this power, these honors and riches, will I give thee—for what? His conditions generally are, that integrity shall be yielded, conscientiousness blunted, and selfishness indulged. Through devotion to worldly interests, Satan receives all the homage he asks. The door is left open for him to enter as he pleases, with his evil train of impatience, love of self, pride, avarice, overreaching, and his whole catalogue of evil spirits. Man is charmed and treacherously allured on to ruin. If we yield ourselves to worldliness of heart and life, Satan is satisfied." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 44-45.

⁹³ THOMPSON, Alden. Ellen G. White's Financed. In: FORTIN, Denis; MOON, Jerry (Eds.). **The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia**. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013. p. 819-825.

⁹⁴ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 169.

The Spirit of Liberality for the Church's Cause

Many of her instructions concerning covetousness and selfishness were related to liberality and giving to the Adventist cause. Before the formal organization of the Seventh-day Adventist church and the regime of tithing and offering, they used a system denominated Systematic Benevolence. This arrangement, she said, was "pleasing to God," but the pride, love of fashions of the world, empty conversations, and selfishness was preventing them from being faithful.⁹⁵ She marked down: "I saw that the least that has been required of Christians in past days, is to possess a spirit of liberality and to consecrate to the Lord a portion of all their increase."⁹⁶

Ellen White applied the same principle of liberality presented in *Testimony 4* to the growing Adventist community in Battle Creek at the time of Volume 5. She exhorted them to take responsibility for offering to the institutions burdened with debt while "coveting earthly possessions or seeking happiness in worldly plans or aspirations."⁹⁷ She had pleaded that "worldliness and covetousness are eating out the vitals of God's people" and that "the spiritual health and prosperity of the church is dependent in a great degree upon her systematic benevolence."⁹⁸

She demarked selfishness and extravagant expenditure of money as a great hindrance to the church's mission. When *Testimony 36* was published in 1904, the church faced one of its significant crises with John Harver Kellog's backsliding, and to some extent, this 8th volume was written to meet those crosswords.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, Ellen White started to increasingly emphasize the role of laypeople in the mission of the Church. And to her, there was low interest in the mission because of selfishness and conformity to the

⁹⁵ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 189-190.

⁹⁶ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 170.

⁹⁷ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 5. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 189-190. By the time of volume 6 (1900), she recalled this principle: "Let us make it manifest that Christ abides in us, by ceasing to expend money on dress, on needless things, when the cause of Christ is crippled for want of means, when debts are left unpaid on our meetinghouses, and the treasury is empty. Do not cultivate a taste for expensive articles of dress or of furniture. Let the work advance as it began, in simple self-denial and faith." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 6. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 441. In 1902, she also appealed to the Seventh-day Adventists members in *Testimony 35* to be benevolent in preparing a fund for workers of the church that were not able to serve anymore. WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 7. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 296.

⁹⁸ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 3. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 405.

⁹⁹ The Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications. The times of Volume Eight. In: WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**, vol. 8. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948. p. 5-6.

world. She also noticed a backsliding of those who were once faithful but were now trapped in worldliness.

In the last Testimony, published in 1909, using a gentle tone, she still urged the church, specifically the lay members, about the "danger of being ensnared by worldliness and covetousness." In the context of compassion, she wrote that God was calling His people out from their limited sphere of action to enter "upon greater enterprises." They should understand that God's mercy "multiplies the demands for their means."¹⁰⁰

The Lukewarm Condition Motif in the Context of Selfishness

As well as in addressing the other notions of worldliness, the lukewarm condition of Laodicea was also associated with the love of money, selfishness, and covetousness. When for the first time, applying the Laodicean message to the Adventist sabbath-keepers in the already mentioned *Testimony 3* (1857), Ellen White called to mind the counsel of the True Witness "be zealous and repent" (Rev. 3:19). The need for repentance is the "worldly-mindedness, selfishness, and covetousness" that had been "eating out the spirituality and life of God's people." She concludes that "the danger of God's people for a few years past has been the love of the world. Out of this have sprung the sins of selfishness and covetousness."¹⁰¹

By the time of *Testimony 22*, the Seventh-day Adventist church expanded its missionary frontiers inside the US and overseas. In a passage destined in counseling ministers, Ellen White uses the misleading perception of Laodicea as being rich and in no need of anything (Rev. 3:17) to say that some ministers were, in fact, "wretched, poor, blind, miserable, and naked" because of their "indolence and pride." The main issue was that they were "neglecting personal piety, purity of heart, and entire consecration to God" because "of their feeling that they are rich and increased with goods."¹⁰²

Accordingly, in the previously mentioned warning to Brother E presented in

¹⁰⁰ She simplified that saying that "the spirit of liberality is the spirit of heaven." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 9. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 254.

¹⁰¹ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 141. She saw that "Satan watches the peculiar, selfish, covetous temperament of some who profess the truth, and he will tempt them by throwing prosperity in their path, offering them the riches of earth". WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 142.

¹⁰² WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 3. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 210.

Testimony 26 for being "dazzled and blinded by the god of this world," she alerted him that True Witness "know thy work" (Rev. 3:15), "not his profession." He professed the Adventist message, but "Satan sought, through the attractions of this world, to enchain" him and paralyze his moral powers. He has made this church member "a slave to this world," and the "love of gain has become a ruling passion." His only salvation was to "return to the Master His talents doubled, laying before Him both principal and interest," showing that he has been a "judicious as well as faithful and persevering worker."¹⁰³

In summary, Ellen White also understood worldliness in the context of financial affairs. She urged the church to the perils of loving this world and being trapped in covetousness, selfishness, and pride. It also counseled many to be liberal in supporting the church's mission because self-prosperity implies the responsibility to help the cause of Seventh-day Adventists. She also identified the lukewarm condition as the love of this world in the context of pride, selfishness, covetousness, and an unhealthy relationship with assets and prosperity. Nevertheless, she was always very assertive in addressing these issues and presented many ways of solving the spiritual problem of worldliness

"A Spirit of Self-denial" - The Antidote Against Worldliness

Undoubtedly, the most frequent appeal for repentance regarding the problem of worldliness is the call for self-denial and sacrifice. In the *Scale Vision* on the first *Testimony* (1855), she stated that "none will enter heaven without making a sacrifice. A spirit of self-denial and sacrifice should be cherished."¹⁰⁴ Additionally, in the *Two-Way* vision, she also pointed out the difficulties of the narrow way (Mat. 7:14) as a self-crucifying path, not expecting everything to move on as smoothly as they were traveling in the broad road.¹⁰⁵

In this matter, Christ is the supreme model and example. In 1864, corresponding with Elder Hull, she said, "we are to look to Christ for an example and imitate the humble pattern"¹⁰⁶ Later, in 1875, she settled that "Christ was the chief Cornerstone, and we must

¹⁰³ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 49,51.

¹⁰⁴ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 126.

¹⁰⁵ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 129

¹⁰⁶ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 431.

build upon this Foundation. Each must have a spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice. The life of Christ upon earth was unselfish; it was marked with humiliation and sacrifice."¹⁰⁷ Correspondingly, six years later, Ellen White emphasized that "the Son of God came to this world to leave an example of a perfect life. He sacrificed Himself for the joy that was set before Him."¹⁰⁸ In fact, using Christ as a role model, she encouraged the need for sacrifice and self-denial, especially in two directions: (1) sacrificing oneself to help the whole cause of the church and (2) sacrificing oneself to reach others in a missionary way.¹⁰⁹

In addition to the topic of sacrifice and self-denial, there are at least four other emphases that she disclosed in the *Testimonies* series: (1) the study of the Bible,¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 3. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 387.

¹⁰⁸ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 615.

¹⁰⁹ On the first direction see WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 483. About the sacrifice for mission see WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 2. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 549. In the last *Testimony*, she concluded that "The duty and delight of all service is to uplift Christ before the people. This is the end of all true labor. Let Christ appear; let self be hidden behind Him. This is self-sacrifice that is of worth. Such self-sacrifice God accepts. Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 9. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 147

¹¹⁰ In the scale vision published in *Testimony* 1, Ellen White mentions that the Bible is the way to escape the seven plagues and should be prioritized over novels and romances. WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 126. She also stated that "there is great necessity for close self-examination in the light of God's word." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 2. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 144. She added later, in *Testimony* 26: "Christ's example is before us. If the Sacred Scriptures were studied and followed, the Christian would be fortified to meet the wily foe; but the word of God is neglected, and disaster and defeat follow. WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 45-46. In 1904, she wrote: "They would be more eager for the light of the word than for the morning paper, magazines, or novels. Their greatest desire would be to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God. And as a result, their lives would be conformed to the principles and promises of the word... Refreshing showers of grace would refresh and revive the soul, causing them to forget all toil and weariness. They would be strengthened and encouraged by the words of inspiration." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 8. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 193.

(2) trials,¹¹¹ (3) earnest prayer,¹¹² and (4) intentionality exercising the mind.¹¹³ And she equally utilized the Laodicean message, specifically, the counsel of the True Witness to buy refined gold, clothes and salve; to repent and be zealous (Rev. 3:18-19) as the only solution for a worldly, lukewarm church. She affirmed that the Holy Spirit is the One who should illuminate the eyes so they could "perceive their sinfulness" and buy "the pure gold which the True Witness counsels the lukewarm."¹¹⁴

Another solution presented by Ellen White in the *Testimonies* for the lukewarm and worldliness condition of the church is the eschatological shaking. To her, conformity to the world is a direct cause for the sifting as "believers yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs" will be separated from the true church.¹¹⁵ On the other hand, the shaking will purify the church for those that did not overcome worldliness: "God is sifting His people. He will have a clean and holy church. We cannot read the heart of man. But the Lord has provided means to keep the church pure. A corrupt people has arisen who could not live with the people of God."¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Ellen White underlined that God could permit trials and sufferings to help someone overcome worldliness: "The trials to which Christians are subjected in sorrow, adversity, and reproach are the means appointed of God to separate the chaff from the wheat. Our pride, selfishness, evil passions, and love of worldly pleasure must all be overcome; therefore God sends us afflictions to test and prove us, and show us that these evils exist in our characters." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 115. She also mentioned purification through difficulties. WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 133.

¹¹² "Could the curtain be rolled back, could you discern the purposes of God and the judgments that are about to fall upon a doomed world, could you see your own attitude, you would fear and tremble for your own souls and for the souls of your fellow men. Earnest prayers of heart-rending anguish would go up to heaven. You would weep between the porch and the altar, confessing your spiritual blindness and backsliding" WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 6. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 408

¹¹³ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 2. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 187,189. WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 6. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 148. Besides those four major emphases, she points out two others in Volume 6, but just once in the context of loving the world. It is (1) church Attendance and (2) the work of temperance. For church attendance see White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:39. For the work of temperance see WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 6. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 111.

¹¹⁴ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 4. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 87-88.

¹¹⁵ The full quote reads: "the mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. In this time, the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat. All who assume the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ's righteousness, will appear in the shame of their own nakedness." WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 5. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 81.

¹¹⁶ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing

In conclusion, in the last *Testimony* (1909), Ellen White presents the kind of spirituality required for the church. "God calls for live men," she attested, "men who are filled with the vivifying influence of His Spirit" and not "lukewarm, but hot and fervent with His love."¹¹⁷ She admonishes the importance of fully consecrated people:

"The work given us is a great and important one, and in it are needed wise, unselfish men, men who understand what it means to give themselves to unselfish effort to save souls. But there is no need for the service of men who are lukewarm, for such men Christ cannot use. Men and women are needed whose hearts are touched with human suffering and whose lives give evidence that they are receiving and imparting light and life and grace."¹¹⁸

Conclusion

Ellen White wrote those 5,000 pages of *Testimonies for the Church* to instruct, share some specific visions, rebuke, and guide, firstly the Sabbatarian Adventists and later the organized Seventh-day Adventist Church. Over a period of 55 years, divided into nine volumes in the final version, she addressed various subjects to persons, families, local communities, and the general audience of the church. She dedicated a considerable part of these pages to discourse about the perils and dangers of worldliness, secularization, conformity, and love of the world. In a nonsystematic way, she does so in at least three different ways.

The first emphasis is a powerful call to separation and uniqueness. As the fervor of the imminent Second Coming had been vanishing with the apparent delay of Jesus, many have been trapped in a less vigorous faith. She used more powerful and direct language in the first 30 *Testimonies* (volumes 1-4), pleading for the believers to live in such a way that their identity was distinct and peculiar, not only from the secular culture but also from other Christian denominations and systems. She was not afraid to be remarked as "too exclusive"¹¹⁹ but emphatically urged the church to maintain its

Association, 1948. p. 99.

¹¹⁷ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 9. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 140.

¹¹⁸ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 9. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 26.

¹¹⁹ WHITE, Ellen G. **Testimonies for the Church**. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948. p. 282.

peculiarities. The later volumes, more focused on the church institutions, also clearly appealed to the church schools, sanitariums, and publishing houses to conserve an Adventist identity regarding spirituality and message.

The second concept relates to practical lifestyle issues such as clothing, conversations, amusements, and actions. In the first two years of the *Testimonies*, she received two very solemn visions: the Scale and the Two-Way visions. In both, she saw, to some extent, a considerable number of Adventists drifting to worldliness in pursuing secular thoughts and possessions. Moreover, the dress issue was very controversial and must be understood with the specific unhealthy fashion that was very popular at that time. Ellen White approached this subjective in three different ways (1) frivolity, (2) pride in contrast to simplicity, and (3) a comprehensive reform in dressing. Firstly, she intended to be much more specific and direct in counseling about fashion; however, because of misunderstanding, she utilized a more general language, usually advocating for simplicity.

The last way worldliness was approached in the *Testimonies* is in the context of finances, pride, and propertities. She defined the "spirit of this world" as the love of money and possessions, prioritizing a material lifestyle. Ellen White attested that covetousness, selfishness, and the love of the world were in the ranks of sabbath keepers. This love of the world was expressed in excessive work, burying the God-given talents in secular activities, and not helping the cause of the church with liberality. She earnestly appealed to believers, especially those in Battle Creek, to support the institutions in debt. In the last two *Testimonies*, she pleaded for the involvement of lay members in the mission of proclaiming the Seventh-day message.

All that was presented in the framework of the Laodicean message of Revelation. Before, the Sabbatarian Adventists viewed as lukewarm the other Millerites that had rejected the message of the Sabbath and the other protestant denominations. However, after 1856, James and Ellen White applied the condition of being lukewarm to the Sabbatarian Adventist. It is at least surprising that in almost any mention of the message of Laodicea in the *37 Testimonies*, the topic of worldliness and conformity to the world is present.

To her, the lukewarm condition represented: (1) a harmful loss of identity in an unhealthy association with the secular culture; (2) the damaging preoccupation with frivolity and pride, comprising fashion, dressing, thoughts, and silly conversations; and (3) having the Spirit of this World, being covetous, proud, and too focused on material

subjects.

Finally, Ellen White elaborated that, using Christ as a model, every believer should nourish a self-denial character. This spirit of sacrifice, in contrast with worldliness, usually went in two directions: (1) sacrificing oneself to help the cause of the church and (2) sacrificing oneself to reach others in a missionary way. Additionally, throughout the nine volumes, she counseled that (1) the study of the Bible, (2) trials, (3) earnest prayer, and (4) the exercise of the mind unto godliness were helpful ways of dealing with this matter. According to her, the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodicean message to be "zealous and repent" is the way to prevent the love of the world.

In sum, in the nine volumes of *Testimonies for the Church*, there is a comprehensive understanding of the topic of worldliness, presented in many ways, utilizing different concepts and approaches, with an intelligible direction from the more specific to the more general. Furthermore, in a plural and even more secular society than in the 19th century, reading the *Testimonies* with these notions in mind should be helpful to those who want to understand Ellen White's thoughts on this subject.

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