

THE  
POLITICS  
OF  
ADVENTISM

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REMNANT

E.G. White Research Center  
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**KEEPING ADVENTISTS INFORMED**

Speaking the truth in love, we aim to inform the electorate of actions which relate to faith, order, freedom, and finance by representative bodies. The mention of a name in these columns, whether favorable or unfavorable, implies no judgment about the personal character of the individual. Unless expressly stated to the contrary, our reference is always to officeholders acting in their official capacity.

**THE "JOHN HUSS CHAPTER MANUSCRIPT":** The manuscript discovered by Dr. D. R. McAdams in the vault where Ellen White's literary heritage is kept in Washington, D.C. will re-open persistent questions about the content and character of her bequest to the church and the world.

Critics of Mrs. White's position in Adventist life have often charged a certain measure of editorial "management" in the process by which her words moved from her pen to the press and on into the homes of people around the world. One of the persistent charges has been that the undoubted literary beauty of Ellen White's prose was at least partly the product of her editor's skill. Marion Davis, who travelled with Mrs. White, was particularly singled out as a person who could have helped Mrs. White to gain the literary reputation she possesses.

**WHAT AN EDITOR CANNOT DO:** The writer is rare indeed who has not been helped by a good editor. When indebtedness to editors is mentioned, the names of many prominent writers, including winners of the Nobel Prize, come to mind. We think no less of these artists because they received help in polishing their works. No matter how skillful the editor's blue pencilling, however, it is inconceivable that the creative energy to be found in a powerful book could come from it. The most an editor can do is prune away the underbrush so that the literary tree will appear at its best, its fruits more readily available. If editors could write powerful books, they would write them for themselves rather than spending their lives on the manicuring of books.

This argument — it seems to us — refutes those who would attribute Mrs. White's power as a religious writer to Marion Davis or anyone else.

**WHAT TEXTUAL CRITICISM CAN DO:** Textual criticism cannot tell us much about why one book is preferred above another. Its potential is more modest: to try to separate the actual works of an author from the works that pretend to be by the author.

**ELLEN WHITE NOT AN ORDINARY WRITER:** The Adventist Church claims that Ellen White was inspired directly by the Holy Spirit to write. Lesser questions, which might have left the lustre of a Milton or a Chaucer or even a Tyndale untarnished, could, potentially, undermine the traditional appraisal of a writer such as she.

**HER WRITINGS CHANGE LIVES:** Adventists stake their jobs, their diet, and their whole lifestyle, (indeed, in wartime, even their very lives) on statements by Ellen White. In the early winter months, for example, the sun sets before the five o'clock closing time of most enterprises. To those who accept Mrs. White's dictums, this means that they must either make special arrangements or forego employment in such firms. This can be a serious economic hardship. If Adventists began the Sabbath at 6 o'clock on Friday night and ended it at six o'clock on Saturday — a practice that Ellen White had a part in discrediting — the employment picture for strict Sabbathkeepers would brighten. The solution most generally favored by Adventists is to enter the health professions, which Adventists allow to perform essential tasks on the Sabbath.

**WHAT WILL THE NEWLY DISCOVERED MANUSCRIPT REVEAL?** Will the revelations of the "McAdams Manuscript" tend to make Adventists skeptical about the directness of the channel between the Holy Spirit and the pages of the works so frequently (and stentoriously) cited as the last word on so many SDA controversies?

Most Adventists would probably agree that both the Bible and the Ellen White writings are authoritative primarily in the field of religion, that is, in shaping our ideas about God and His character and His relationships with men and the world, but the majority of Adventists consider them authoritative, at least to some extent, beyond religion, as can be seen, for instance, in the insistence by administrators such as Willis J. Hackett, Vice President of the General Conference, that Adventist Seminary teachers must assent to the notion that St. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews. Authorship is a question of science, not religion. Hackett recently admitted in public that he held up the appointment of James Cox, who holds a Ph.D. in New Testament from Harvard, over precisely this question. The authority cited in such cases is always some statement from Ellen White.

a newsletter of the loyal opposition

**ARE THERE REVEALED FACTS?** A minority of Adventists, while accepting the authority of Ellen White in religion, are dubious about appeals to her writings for the settlement of such factual questions as the authorship of Hebrews and the age of the earth. They argue that both these matters were probably taken for granted by Ellen White and not consciously emphasized, because her beliefs on these matters were in harmony with nearly all evangelical Christians at the time.

No, say the more severe proponents; these writings are inspired by God, and God would never inspire an error.

**SHOULD OUR VIEW OF INSPIRATION BE A PRIORI OR A POSTERIOR?** Like most questions, the question of what God would and would not inspire can be discussed with greater fruitfulness when we have some evidence. The manuscript which Dr. McAdams has brought to light is precisely the kind of evidence which a sound view of inspiration can be based. Rather than taking an armchair view, that God could do this but couldn't do that, let us get up out of our armchairs and let our view of inspiration be shaped by the products of inspiration which fall into our hands!

**WHAT THE MANUSCRIPT REVEALS:** According to those who have seen it, the newly discovered manuscript contains more than the average number of technical flaws: spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, and incomplete sentences. If the Holy Spirit inspired this undoubted manuscript, then, since the manuscript contains a plethora of insignificant errors, we can be sure that the Holy Spirit has inspired a certain amount of literature that contains errors of a technical kind, and, by parity of reasoning, we may properly suspect that He might have done so in the similarly trivial cases of statements about the authorship of Hebrews and offhand remarks about the 6,000 year age of the earth.

**THERE IS MORE:** But, say those who have examined the manuscript, the surprises are not confined to matters of spelling, style, punctuation, syntax, and clarity. Dr. McAdams has conclusively shown that large sections of the chapter are a close paraphrase of Wylie's narrative on the same subject. This does not come as a shock to readers of *Spectrum* (a scholarly publication of the semi-independent Association of Adventist Forums) or the Seventh-day Adventists of the time, since Wylie's book had been given out as a premium by Adventist publishing institutions. William Petersen's articles on the subject (in *Spectrum*, early 70's) of Ellen White's literary dependence opened the subject a few years ago, but the evidence of direct and near-total dependence was never so conclusively marshalled in print before.

**THE EXPLANATION:** The statement inserted in the current edition of *Great Controversy* by the White Estate's editors, namely, that Mrs. White borrowed only those portions of Wylie, D'Aubigne, et al, which she had previously "seen in vision," can no longer be sustained. It must be rejected as a clumsy device for saving a face that that doesn't need to be saved.

**MORE SURPRISES:** Further surprises in the manuscript include the statement that there were about "2,500" years between the death of Abel and the death of Jesus Christ. In Adventist terms, this would shrink the total age of the earth to about 4,500 years! What does this tell us about the level of precision with which she used numbers?

**THE EDITORIAL PROCESS:** Perhaps the most puzzling aspect of the affair is that the original material in the manuscript, representing Mrs. White's own words (mainly hortatory and non-factual) never achieved publication, either in *Great Controversy* or anywhere else.

According to our source, McAdams finds this peculiar, because, in spite of the misspellings, bad grammar, etc., the material contains passages of considerable power.

Our source tells us that it is easy to see how Ellen's reading for *Great Controversy* could, together with the persuasions of Waggoner and Jones, have strongly influenced Ellen White away from traditional Adventist legalism and toward the Reformation position of Righteousness by Faith, which she risked her position in the Adventist world in order to espouse.

**A BIG MISTAKE:** By focussing on a lot of little numerical and factual inaccuracies as the touchstone of inspiration, those who would deny that God could move a writer to put down an imperfect sentence ignore the far more important question of the substance, the moral and intellectual power and passion, of a piece of writing.

Errors there are, in abundance, in this newly discovered manuscript, but the biggest error of all would be to haggle over factual details and fail to respond to a woman overcome with passion for God and justice and freedom.

**THE PLAGIARISM ISSUE:** What started out as a close paraphrase of Wylie, interlarded with Ellen White's commentaries on the spiritual significance of the events narrated, was somehow edited into and published as a close paraphrase of Wylie and almost nothing else. That the hand of an editor — quite possibly that of Marion Davis — was at work, both in polishing the language of the draft, and in rejecting so much of the original matter, seems the most probable explanation, but it is possible that Ellen White herself chose to delete the sections of her own composition. The manuscript does not so indicate. It is also possible that this draft was lost and, since Ellen had to re-do the whole thing, she chose to leave out the touching comparison between the martyrdom of Huss and the martyrdom of Jesus that makes up much of the newly surfaced material. All of these are possibilities over which the emerging textual critics of the denomination will undoubtedly struggle in years to come.

**AN ERROR THAT HURTS:** As far as Marion Davis or some other editor is concerned, most scholars would fault the deletions from this manuscript as far too drastic: The impression that the chapter is simply a paraphrase of Wylie (which Ellen White had no right to claim as her own composition) is largely the result of these deletions. She got a bum rap.

**IS IT TYPICAL?** The evidence in the newly-discovered manuscript goes to only one chapter of one of Ellen White's many books, but in the absence of evidence that this chapter is unique, it is reasonable to conclude that the sample we possess is typical of the book as a whole, and, to some extent, of other books as well. The call that concerned Adventists have been sounding for decades, for a thorough reformation of the way in which the E. G. White archives are managed, with special reference to the full availability of all her writings to scholars and the general lay public, is likely to gain strength and, we sincerely hope, favorable outcome. Mr. and Mrs. Average Adventist remain quite unconvinced by the arguments set forth for keeping secret this data that is so shatteringly relevant to their lives in a corporate body where decisions are so often made in the name of that data.

There is really no good reason, to our knowledge, why anyone in the world, if he so desired, should be prevented from receiving, for an adequate fee, any or all of Mrs. White's literary heritage either in printed or in xerographic form.

**QUESTIONS ON THE FORM OF PUBLICATION:** The form in which Mrs. White's writings have been printed and published for sale seems not to have been dictated by their manifest purpose. That purpose, it is well to remind ourselves, is to help people know the reality and goodness of God. Considerations as to the total quantity of sales seem to have carried more weight than they should. Dozens of volumes, with generous margins of white space surrounding the printed text, may help build denominational publishing houses and support the Estate's budget, but they do not help to get the material into the hands of discerning readers.

**DOUBLETS:** Another flaw in the process is that there are a tiresome number of repetitions. The Index shows three or four citations for some statements.

**MISSING CONTEXT:** A far more serious flaw than either of the previous is that explanatory and critical notes occur only in controversial passages, where the views of the denomination and/or the White Estate are affirmed. (For example, when a passage seems to uphold the use of pork, a footnote explains that Ellen White later changed her views.)

**LUNATIC FRINGE:** These notes are perfectly in order, but a far more comprehensive job of supplying missing contextual data is overdue. Its absence means that time bombs keep ticking away in our corporate life, ready to explode when some member of the lunatic fringe takes a fix on some ambiguous passage and urges his followers to march.

**POSSIBLE FOLLIES:** There is no reason why a revolt could not be started by devout and rigid observers of the prohibitions against cheese, life insurance, bicycles, photographs, tennis, or opera, just as they already have been to some extent, over the issue of sending children to school before the age of eight, wearing dresses shorter than nine inches from the floor, and using antibiotics. Nothing, of course, will absolutely stop the lunatic fringe from misusing any kind of scripture, but a responsible denomination should not leave fissionable materials lying about.

**A RECENT SNAFU?** Proper footnoting, for example, could probably have prevented the mismanagement of thousands of youngsters, who have been put out of "synch" with their peer groups because of an imagined prohibition against sending six-year-olds to school. (Ellen White suggested that children be held back for a couple of years so as to free up funds for the construction of early medical facilities.)

**WILL THIS PARLOUS SITUATION CONTINUE?** Will our children and grandchildren continue to be imperilled by booby traps laid for them — out of materials we provide — by Pied Pipers with a mimeographed collection of "statements" under the arm? Just as an example, will dozens of young Adventists continue to feel guiltier and guiltier and finally drop out of school, to seek some instant-job-readiness scheme, just because we have allowed chapters such as e.g., "Speedy Preparation" in *Fundamentals of Christian Education* to stand as though it were the comprehensive answer to the question of preparing for a career of service?

**YOUNG LIVES MISDIRECTED: REMNANT** could name at least a dozen people between the ages of fifteen and thirty whose lives have been needlessly misdirected, in part at least, by such passages. The least we could do is to append commentary that puts the passage into perspective. If the youngsters still want to drop out of the courses they need to become Physicians, or Dentists, or Teachers, or Ministers, or Lawyers, or Nurses, or whatever; if they still want to head off into the boondocks under the illusion that the combinations of backwoods, carob, monastic discipline and poverty will solve their problems, then that will be their privilege, but they will no longer be justified in cursing us because we held back information from them that might have helped them to ford the waters of life at a more reasonable place.

**A FURTHER CONSIDERATION:** The persistent suspicion that the handling of the manuscripts—both autographs and typescripts—has obscured the role played by W. C. White and others in determining what reached the press will undoubtedly flare up again with the publication of the McAdams monograph. A suspicion is not a demonstration, of course, but, then, neither is it a demonstration to merely label it as groundless. If the White Estate wishes to put these suspicions to rest, it could easily do so. It could publish an inventory of the White Estate holdings as thoroughly, say, as the excavators at Heshbon have published their far less momentous findings. That the White Estate does not catalogue its treasures so that the inquiring scholar, can, for instance, be very sure that Ellen White wrote about the "alpha of apostasy" on her own initiative back in 1905-'07, and that this was not something which Daniells and W.C. had a hand in persuading her to say, is one of the pieces of evidence that the Adventist who follows Ellen White's advice to "let the kingly power of reason bear sway in the life" must take into account.

**IMPORTANT BACKGROUND:** After 1885, probably because of her growingly ardent espousal of the Reformation doctrine of Justification and Sanctification (the Adventist term is: "Righteousness by Faith"), which was seen by the Adventist powers-that-were as a denial of older Adventist emphases, Ellen White gradually became more and more of a persona non grata in certain circles in the American Church. These older Adventist emphases tended (a) toward legalism and (b) toward the view that the Advent movement was a unique, or perhaps, a "restored" movement that was to achieve the final vindication, through self-discipline, of God's requirement that man obey biblical laws perfectly while on earth.

The new emphasis, characterized by the preaching of Waggoner and Jones, and given a historical setting by Great Controversy (which contradicted the "restoration" notion by tracing continuity from the apostolic to the advent movements and dwelling on such men as Huss, Wycliffe, Luther, and Wesley along the way) denounced legalism as a perversion of the gospel and classed the Advent movement with faithful evangelical believers since the time of Christ.

**HOSTILITY:** This disapproving attitude toward Mrs. White by her husband's former associates (perhaps influenced by male sexism, to some extent) was probably one of the most important factors in the decision of the GC Committee to "invite" Mrs. White to live in Europe, and then Australia, as well as in her decision to accept the "invitation." (This is also the background for Ellen's decision to publish Steps to Christ with Fleming H. Revell rather than with the Review or Pacific Press.)

**AUSTRALIAN DISCOVERIES:** It was while she was in Australia that the triumvirate of W.C. White, A.G. Daniells, and Ellen White was formed. This association developed a platform — the reformation of the denomination's polity -- and rode into office on it at the General Conference session of 1901. Daniells remained in power for twenty-one years. After he got into office he tinkered with the constitution of 1901 so as to produce the centralized polity and strong executive by which the denomination operates so successfully today.

**WHERE THERE IS NO VISION:** Ellen White was no longer being granted public visions by this time. She was 74 years of age in 1901. She went into semi-retirement at Elmshaven in Napa County, California. On occasion she and her assistant, W.C., received requests for guidance for such denominational issues as the termination of the medical school in Michigan, the resumption of the same institution at Loma Linda, in California, and, as the clouds began to darken over Europe and the Middle East, on questions having to do with war.

**SWISS REPORT:** While she had been in Switzerland, Ellen White wrote about some of the young Adventist men there who had, true to the Swiss requirement, done their "soldier service" on active duty for a time. They had earned medals as marksmen, and Ellen did not seem to disapprove of the practice.

**W.C. AND ELLEN: A COMINGLING?** Prior to the 1914 war, the position of Adventists toward combatancy had moved from the reluctant approval of armsbearing toward a kind of qualified pacifism in which the young men were urged to accept the draft, but to request noncombatant status that would allow them to work on Sabbath in battle conditions as medical corpsmen and the like.

The government of the United States under the administration of Abraham Lincoln was an impressionable target for Adventist efforts to secure favorable treatment for their youth. Before the next American draft of soldiers began, however, a letter was received at Elmshaven from a country where military duty was seldom, if ever, trimmed to suit compunctions against killing or the observance of a holy day. We sincerely hope that no one will imagine that we are suggesting, in what follows, any impropriety in the response of W.C. White to this crisis. In our opinion the denomination owes a large debt of gratitude to W.C. and his son, Arthur, for their unselfish use of the power that their position as Mrs. White's son and grandson gave them. They have both put the interests of the cause, as they see them, above their private interests. They have never claimed to be infallible.

**A QUESTION PERSISTS:** Nevertheless, we who are living in the 1970's and looking forward to an indeterminate amount of time on this unpredictable planet, dare not allow gratitude and delicacy to prevent us from examining this vital question: did W.C. White's opinions sometimes gain acceptance as the inspired counsel of Ellen

White? If so, the blame is not necessarily W.C.'s, but no matter where the blame lies, it is not the important issue. The important issue for those who credit Mrs. White's statements with divine authority is: which are her statements and which are not?

**THE RESULTS OF MISUNDERSTANDING CAN BE TRAGIC:** In June, 1915, Elder Guy Dail, Secretary of the European Division of SDA invited an expression of opinion from Ellen White at Elmshaven on the issue of whether young German SDAs should perform military duty even on Saturday, as a letter from L.R. Conradi, the President of the Division, had given them the right to choose to do.

It was the last month of Mrs. White's life.

W.C. replied on his mother's behalf. He said that he had recently pointed out to her that some members of the faith, both in America and in Europe, believed it better for young Adventists to refuse to bear arms, even when they knew that, as a result of their action, they would be shot. Mrs. White replied to her son, "I do not think they ought to do that. I think they ought to stand to their duty as long as time lasts."

**AMBIGUITY:** But what was their duty? That was precisely the question to which Elder Dail and his young Adventist brethren had wanted an answer, but the ailing prophetess, while not wishing to see them shot, had seemingly left the question of their duty up to their individual conscience, just as Conradi had done.

According to Jacob Patt, the meaning of the statement W.C. had quoted was not "absolutely clear to the denominational officers, and caused some confusion."

**POSTSCRIPT:** After the letter was dispatched from St. Helena, Mrs. White, despite her infirmities, sent a letter to the European Division in which she encouraged all European Adventist men called to arms to perform their military duty as long as necessary.

Whether the Lord had opened the future to her sufficiently for her to see that German Adventists in the trenches would kill and be killed by English, French, and American Adventists in opposite trenches is not absolutely clear, but we may be pardoned for suspecting that it had not, and that if it had, she might have been less hearty in her suggestion that the Germans do their duty.

In this second letter, Ellen recalled that when Christ stood before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judaea, He had "recognized that wars were not always unjust or wrong." This is an apparent reference to John 18:36, where Jesus says to Pilate:

My kingdom does not belong to this world. If it did, my followers would be fighting to save me from arrest by the Jews. My kingly authority comes from elsewhere...You would have no authority at all over me if it had not been granted you from above; and therefore the deeper guilt lies with the man who handed me over to you. John 18:36 and 19:11. NEB.

**HOW THE STATEMENT WAS INTERPRETED.** Mrs. White's statement was generally interpreted by German Adventists to mean that Adventist men should faithfully perform their military duty, if necessary, by bearing arms and serving on Saturday. Adventist leaders felt that Adventist young men who tried to be excused from military duty were trying to escape a necessary duty. Conradi had advised the members of the church to pray for the victory of the German military forces. The official version is that he did this without the sanction of other levels of the Adventist organization.

**SABBATH PRIORITY:** According to Patt, "Members of the European Division Executive Committee hoped that if SDAs faithfully performed their duties to the government, the denomination's desire to respect the seventh-day Sabbath question would receive more sympathetic attention." Pacifism did not seem to be the big question.

Some Adventists refused to follow Conradi and the leadership. They opposed the Kaiser's war aims, and refused to be drafted. They became, for the ensuing three or four years, hunted criminals. The majority followed the advice of the German SDA leaders and their young men entered the service and managed their scruples as they saw fit.

**OUR ONLY SCHISM SO FAR:** A.G. Daniells was present at the postwar meeting to settle the dispute between the "collaborators" and the "resisters." He persuaded the incumbent SDA officials to acknowledge their "error" in supporting the war aims of the Kaiser, and also to express their regret for the results of that "error."

This did not satisfy the German SDAs whose sons had spent the previous three or four years in hiding for conscience' sake. A schism resulted, which has continued to this day. The SDA Reform movement, which is about to build a significant church edifice in Southern California, was the result. It has attracted mainly people of European extraction who prefer the literalistic interpretation of the Bible and Ellen White's writings. (Some of them, for example, will not accept any drug treatments of any kind, including antibiotics, etc.)

**THE QUESTION:** Did A. G. Daniells' loyalty to W.C. White have anything to do with his tilt toward the collaborationists rather than the resisters? We may never know. What we do know is that the role of Ellen and W.C. in the confusing situation that resulted in the German schism has received little or no exposure beyond the shelves of research libraries.

Adventists, who have purchased millions of dollars worth of her books, and have patterned their lives, some times at a certain sacrifice, after what they take to be her advice, richly deserve to know exactly what Ellen White said and wrote, and what changes, if any, occurred in the process of transmission. They deserve to know the context of her writings, and they deserve to be able to consult her writings in an inexpensive, compact edition without duplications or excessive white space. Whether liberal or conservative, all Adventists can unite on this and the Ellen G. White Estate is to be congratulated for having co-operated with McAdams in highlighting this issue.

**THE LORENZO VALLA OF ADVENTISM:** The agent for letting the cat out of the bag could hardly have been prepared more efficiently for his pivotal task.

Adventist Colporteurs (bless 'em all!) sell millions of dollars worth of subscription books from house-to-house every year, and a considerable proportion of the profit on these books goes as royalties to the Ellen G. White Estate, of which Arthur White has been the Director for something like forty years. The Publishing Department of the General Conference of SDA, on one of the floors above the White Estate Office, governs and promotes the manufacture, distribution, and sale of these and other books. A pivotal (if not dominant) figure in this Department for much of the time that Arthur White was in the Estate Office was D. A. McAdams, who spent his life promoting Adventist literature with considerable success. When he retired, Elder McAdams was the Secretary of the Department, and had held that office for several years. That he and Arthur White should have formed a trustful relationship was, from the point of view of the Estate at least, eminently desirable. They were not likely to take the source of their income for granted. D. A. McAdams retired a few years ago and moved to Texas. Not long afterward, his son, D. R. McAdams ("Don"), followed him to that state.

**TRAINING FOR THE TASK:** When he came to maturity, Don followed the historical profession and took a doctorate degree at Duke University, specializing in English political history. He became, in the course of his graduate work, a skillful judge of manuscripts and gained experience in the grouping, collation, comparison, and analysis of such documents. In other words, although, like Lorenzo Valla, he was not primarily a biblical scholar, he was a capable textual critic!

**THE TAKOMA PARK CONNECTION:** Arthur White had known Don as a boy. When the earnest, zealous, and capable young Adventist he had always accepted as one of the "General Conference family" showed up at the White Estate vault, he was naturally afforded all the courtesies any other visitor would receive, and (the possibility can hardly be denied) he may even have been shown things that other scholars would not have been shown.

Whether this conjecture (it is not intended as a charge) be true or not, Dr. Don McAdams, now the president of Southwestern Adventist College and a member of the General Conference Executive Committee, but then a Professor at the denomination's Andrews University, was shown a manuscript, and it turned out to be the autograph draft for a chapter in one of Ellen White's most influential books: *Great Controversy*, which has been sold by the thousands from the satchels of the elder McAdams' Colporteurs.

**WHAT IT ALL MEANS:** That manuscript, reportedly identified by the White Estate as direct from Ellen White's hand, will convince all but the most thoroughly frozen minds that the textual criticism of the vast corpus of Mrs. White's words must not be allowed to delay any longer.

#### NOTES

1. It is likely that her reading for *Great Controversy*, since it led her to extol such heroes as Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, and Wesley, influenced Ellen White's theology and went far toward swinging her to favor the views of Waggoner and Jones and oppose the legalism against which these heroes so ardently revolted.
2. Jacob Michael Patt, *The History of the Advent Movement in Germany* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 1958). Xerographic reproductions available from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, U.S.A. at so much per page.
3. The Bible Societies of England and the United States have traditionally published scripture "without note or comment," but the *Today's English Bible*, a superb translation recently published, has excellent introductory articles for each book and other helps. A text out of context easily becomes a pretext. All heretical movements arise from someone taking a text out of context.