

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
GSEM534 – Issues in Ellen White Studies

Supplemental Lecture: Appendix A

Anna C. Rice: An Illustration of Confusing Illumination with Inspiration

Anna C. Rice (1865-1926)

I. Anna C. Rice's biographical background ¹

- A. Anna C. (Phillips) Rice was born in Devonshire, England, May 6, 1865 and died in Richmond, Virginia, October 30, 1926. Her widowed mother brought her to the United States when she was six years old.
- B. She accepted the Adventist Message in Cleveland, Ohio, at the age of 25 and was befriended by a California minister, J. D. and his wife, Cora Rice.² The Rices took her into their home and adopted her as their child. She took their name and since she never married, retained it for the remainder of her life.
- C. Her experience of the 1890s will be discussed in greater detail in the remainder of this outline.
- D. In later life, she worked as a Bible worker in several conferences and finally in Virginia, where she suffered from heart disease for eight years. She is buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia.³



II. Anna Rice's testimonies and their influence

- A. Beginning at least by August 1892, Rice began to write out counsels to people based on what she believed God had given to her by special revelation. In August 1892, she did not use the term vision. Instead, she used less specific though certainly loaded, words to present her testimonies. These included such phrases as "I have seen," "He had shown me," "it all came back to me," "write just as long as it came," "Lord in his



Ellen G. White (1827-1915)

1 For helpful overviews on Anna Rice see Glen Baker, "Anna Phillips-Second Prophet?" *Adventist Review*, February 6, 1986, 8-10; idem, "Anna Phillips-Not Another Prophet: A Story of Misguided Sincerity and Manufactured Visions," *Adventist Review*, February 20, 1986, 8-10; George R. Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy: The Case of A. T. Jones* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1987), 104-16; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Australian Years, 1891-1900*, vol. 4 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1983), 125-132.

2 Obituary: "Jesse Dan Rice," *Pacific Union Recorder*, February 23, 1953, 14.

3 C. J. Coon, "Obituaries," *Review and Herald*, December 23, 1926, 22.

goodness caused me to see it," "the words just as they came to me."⁴ In another letter she used such phrases as, "The Lord presents your cases to me,"

- B. Her style of writing was linguistically like Ellen White's and was in the form of personal testimonies. Some parts were quite inspirational: "Christ alone can set them free. Then why not lift him up in all his glory? Let the Saviour's and God's precious Words show them they are wrong. Read the Word and teach it as it is in Christ Jesus, and God by his own Spirit will contrast the true and the false to them. . . . Take the precious Word alone. Lift the Saviour up in all his beauty. As he is life to you he will be to others."⁵ Another letter of testimony included direct statements: "Sister, you saw that your husband did not live up to the high standard that God's Word requires, and it was a grief to you. Yet you shrank from doing different from what he did, and yielded little by little until your own individuality was lost in his. . . . The Lord has plead with you but you would not listen. . . . Brother, you are self-willed. Your will is not wholly sanctified to the Lord."⁶
- C. Rice advocated celibacy, avoiding pregnancy, and perfectionism. She wrote to a couple that children should not be conceived any more: "God gave woman to man to be a help meet to him, and told them to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. But the earth is about to pass away, only a few short years at most, a very few, and the Lord will come and the earth be destroyed. Then could you raise children to God's glory now? No! For they would soon be laid away. The time is past when children can be brought into the world for the glory of God, and God did not create woman for man's pleasure! Far from it."

She wrote on celibacy, "Everything pertaining to this life must be given up, and God will test every man. . . . The time has come of which Paul spoke when he said, 'But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none.'" Finally she wrote of perfection, "We must be perfect even as he is perfect. Living perfect as we will live in heaven, without sin or any self in us. For we can not enter heaven unless we are perfect."⁷

- D. At some point during 1893, A. T. Jones accepted Rice as a prophet. In his preaching at the Battle Creek Dime Tabernacle, he began to use her writings interchangeably with Ellen White's.⁸ By 1893, Jones was at the height of his influence and his words of support carried great weight. Perhaps the most important event that brought the issue to a head was the Week of Prayer service that occurred the last week of 1893. Students, workers, and church members had experienced a revival of spiritual life in the previous months. Sabbath afternoon on December 30, 1893, Jones made an appeal using both Ellen White's writings and those of Anna Rice.
1. Rice's testimony in particular called for a "tearing off" of gold and jewelry. During the appeal a woman had voluntarily brought forward a "magnificent gold watch." Three hundred came forward for prayer including sixty-six new converts. During the following testimony meeting, another watch was brought forward. At that point Jones invited others to follow Rice's testimony and "tear off" their gold and ornaments. There was a general movement forward and jewelry, costly furs and feather plumes, money, and even gifts of real estate were brought to the altar. Jones estimated the value at \$6,000.⁹

4 Anna C. Rice to "My Dear Brother," August 4, 1892 (White Document File 363a), Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.

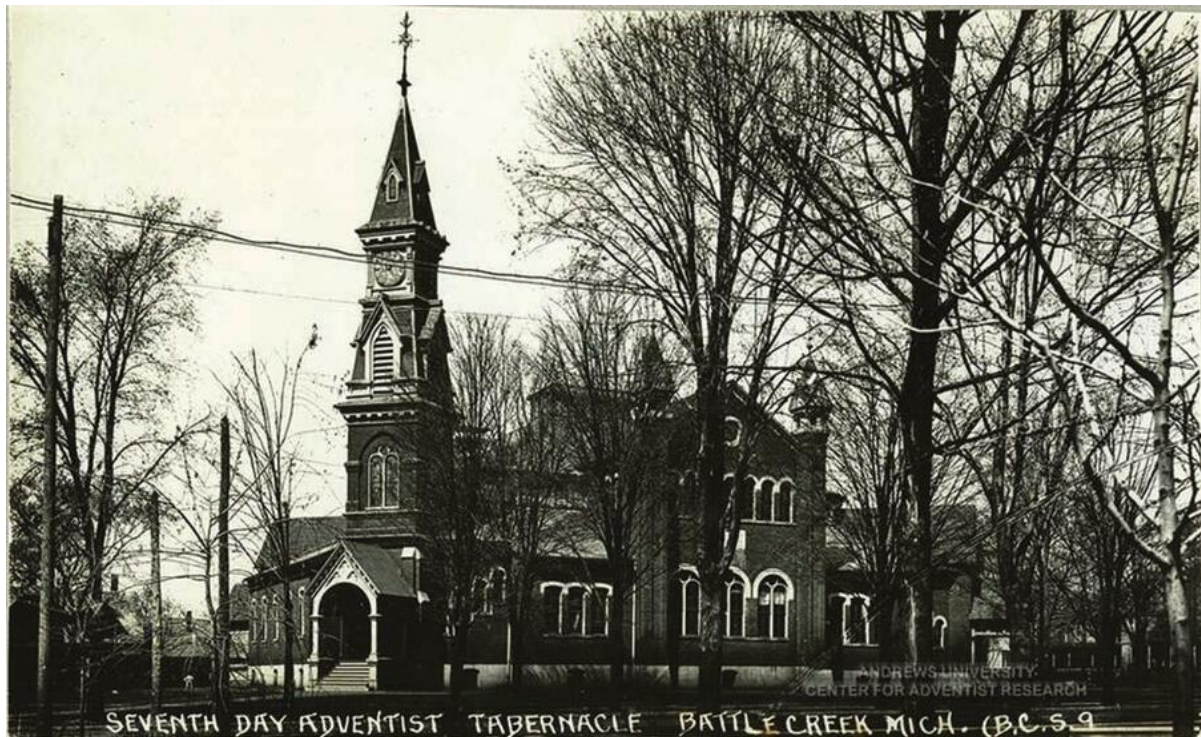
5 Ibid.

6 Anna C. Rice to "Dear Brother and Sister," August 10, 1892 (White Document File 363a), Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.

7 Ibid.

8 C. H. Jones to Ellen G. White, December 14, 1893 (White Document File 363a), Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.

9 A. T. Jones, "Sabbath, Dec. 30, in Battle Creek," *Review and*



2. If one were to take only the fruits of Rice's ministry as the test of her prophetic authority, then the evidence is compelling. Certainly many in Battle Creek felt there could be no question now of the truthfulness of her claims.
- E. L. T. Nicola wrote fully to O. A. Olsen, General Conference president, about developments, on March 2, 1894.¹⁰
1. He described how Jones and Prescott believed that people could hear and know the "voice of God." Nicola had been told that at a district conference meeting Jones had read first some testimonies from Ellen White and then from Anna Rice and asked if they could tell the difference.
 2. There were some who believed that the more prophecy the better and by as many people as possible. They were listening to "know the voice." Nicola reported that quickly a second lady, Sister Porter, wrote a testimony and "claimed the spirit of prophecy." She continued to expand her testimonies and share them more widely with the professed support of Jones and Prescott.
 3. The writings of Anna Rice were distributed beyond Battle Creek and became a sensation in the church. "These testimonies multiplied very rapidly," wrote Nicola, "They were sent all over the country. They were gotten out through the mimeograph process, and were also printed. The testimony read by Elder Jones in the Tabernacle, was read shortly after at the Bible school by Eld. Durland.

Herald, January 2, 1894, 11.

¹⁰ L. T. Nicola to O. A. Olsen, March 2, 1894 (White Document File 363a), Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.

From Anna C. Rice D.F. 363.

Battle Creek, Mich., Feb. 21, 1893.

Elder A. J. Jones,

Dear Brother:-

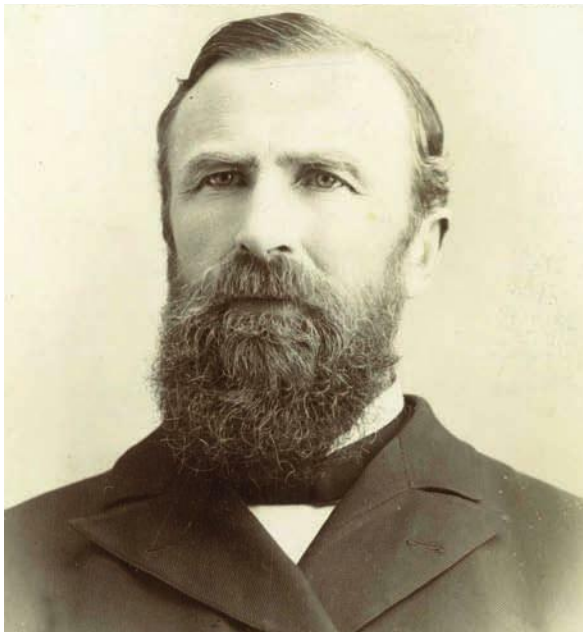
I now send you a few of the thoughts y that were given me last summer, the latter part of July or the first of August. There was so much came before me that it would take me so long to copy it all at once that I am going to copy it in different parts at different times as I have time. I felt when the Lord let me see it that it was his great love for one of the weakest of his children that causes him to do it, as I had had so few privileges, being shut in and away from our people as I was. I had none of our books until I was healed, and then I went right away to Chicago and had no time while there to read anything only what came in the regular study. And then when I went out to Ogden last Spring, and had so little time after I got there to read and study either my Bible or the testimonies, I felt it was God's great love that caused him to let me see many things that he did, and felt that he wanted to help me, knowing how little I knew and how hard it was for me to learn in some ways. He showed me many things in such a simple way so that I might understand them better, and by showing me these things I could see and understand. As I was reading over the thoughts last evening they seemed so simple and plain to me that I thought, No wonder it looks like foolishness to those who have been so long ahead of me in the truth, and yet I could not help praising the Lord that he did give it so simple and plain to me, so I could understand my duty and what God required. And I wish of all God's children had more of the simplicity of Christ. When I first saw the Testimonies I was overjoyed to think that I could understand them, for I had never seen but one of our books before, and that was THOUGHTS ON DANIEL AND REVELATION, and I felt almost discouraged fearing I never would understand it. But now, I praise the dear Lord more and more that he healed my body so I could be out among our people and receive help, and that he loves and teaches even me. When these things were shown to me first, I did not know that the Lord wanted me to tell it to others, not until he caused me to see it the second time and made known to me that I was to tell it to others, to you. And you know it was a long time before I could yield to do it. Before I begin to tell you what I saw last summer, I want to tell you what I saw last week, as I have felt impressed that I should do so.

It was an immense harvest field, a field of grain. And as I stood and looked over it I thought, It cannot all be ripe, there must be some out of the way corners that are not ripe. Just then as though he had read my thoughts, the angel asked if I did not believe it was all ripe. I told him I thought there would be some places that would not be ripe, and he told me to come and see. I followed him around and through it, looking over all the grain in every corner and in the midst of it, and could not find even one straw that was not ripe in any place.

Surely the Lord is good to us all, and he does not send that which we do not need, and I praise him that he is teaching me, and that he gave me this last summer. I send this to you Bro. Jones as that is what I was told to do and leave it with you to give the people. And so I leave it

Your sister in Christ,

Anna C. Rice.

Leroy T. Nicola (1856 – 1940)*Ole Andres Olsen (1845 – 1915)*

He had copies in his desk, and on request of his students, on different occasions, they were taken and read and copied. I can vouch for the truthfulness of what I tell you. Bro. Frank Moody, from Iowa, procured copies of these testimonies from Eld. Durland, and engaged a copyist to write them off for him. He paid her two dollars in cash for the work. This same brother is attending the Bible school on borrowed money. These testimonies were used in the division meetings of the General Conference school with as much freedom as if they were authorized in every particular. One good brother sat up the entire night and read and meditated on them."

4. Nicola's letter to Olsen also described some of the extreme statements or "minute transactions" that Rice had addressed in her testimonies. She said that "every single straw was ripe [presumably for the final harvest]" and that "moments only remain [presumably till the Second Coming]. She rebuked a woman who "cooked lard in the food of her unbelieving husband, who requested this to be done." She then said that this wife sinned and was in danger of being lost.
5. An important mistake that contributed to spreading the flame of excitement regarding new visions was that not enough people of experience in the church were consulted. Nicola wrote: "Those longest in the work here, and having the most experience in all such things were never even provided with copies of the Rice testimonies. There was Elder Smith, Bro. Henry, and even my father, who had been called here to look after the interests of the Battle Creek church, were not consulted in the least."
6. Those who did not accept Rice's testimonies were "unchristianized by those who were so ardent in their favor," wrote Nicola. "They

claimed to 'know the voice' of the Good Shepherd, and those where thought not to know the voice, who hesitated to declare in favor of the new prophet," were considered to not be listening to the Spirit of God.

III. Ellen White's response to the Anna Rice issue

- A. Ellen White wrote from Australia on November 1, 1893, to J. D. and Cora Rice, Anna's surrogate parents. She refused to take a stand on whether Anna had received special revelations or not. She did specifically tell J. D. Rice not to encourage Anna to think "she had been ordained of God to do a certain work." She additionally told Rice that he should not promote or interpret Anna's testimonies to others or say that she (Ellen White) sanctioned them. Finally, she told him that it was wrong to "impress minds that this is a work which they must receive as from God."¹¹
- B. This cautionary letter was received by C. H. Jones for the Rices by at least November 30, 1893. Jones also shared the letter with California Conference president S. N. Haskell.
 1. Haskell had talked and corresponded with Anna. He wrote to Ellen White and expressed his belief that "in times of trial the Holy Spirit, for her own encouragement, has especially enlightened her mind. She is a consecrated simple minded girl."¹²
 2. C. H. Jones also wrote Ellen White and indicated that some ministers were mixing up Ellen White's writings and those of Anna Rice without telling which was which and many who did not accept Rice's experience were not listening to anything that was read. Thus Ellen White's testimonies were being ignored as well.¹³

- C. On December 23, 1893, Ellen White wrote a more general letter repeating and expanding upon what she had written to J. D. Rice. Most important, she now took a stand against the prophetic authority of Anna's testimonies.

1. She compared J. D. Rice and Anna's experience with that of James M. Garmire who, about ten years earlier, had encouraged his daughter, Anna Garmire to believe that she was receiving visions and "commingled common, cheap things with important subjects."¹⁴
2. She wrote of Anna Rice's experience, "Anna Phillips should not have been given the encouragement she has had. It has been a great injury to her—fastened her in a deception. I am sorry that any of our brethren and sisters are ready to take up with these supposed revelations, and imagine they see in them the divine credentials."
3. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Ellen White's letter is that she took an interest in helping Anna. She wrote explicitly, "Sister Phillips is not to be condemned or denounced; she has been led along step by step in false paths. . . . Ideas have been given to this sister by Brother Rice, and encouragement by Brother A. T. Jones and several others, that have given her confidence and assurance."
4. When Sister Porter, who had been sharing her professed testimonies, though less prominently than Rice, heard about Ellen White's testimony, she spoke with Jones who advised her (according to Nicola), "You had better keep pretty still about them." She agreed and her "visions" were not heard about again.¹⁵

11 Ellen G. White to Bro. and Sr. Rice, November 1, 1893 (Letter 54, 1893), Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.

12 S. N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, November 3, 1893, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.

13 C. H. Jones to Ellen G. White, December 14, 1893, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD; J. O. Corliss, *A Note of Warn-*

ing (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, c. 1899).

14 Ellen G. White to "Brethren and Sisters," December 23, 1893 (Letter 4, 1893), Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.

15 Nicola to Olsen, March 2, 1894.

5. Ellen White in this letter gave a vital principle on how to approach new prophetic claimants. "I am so sorry that brethren in whom our people have confidence should appear in any way to endorse these things that claim to be from God, when no real ground for faith has been given. It is a terrible mistake to accept and present before the people that which we have not had unmistakable evidence is the revelation of God."
- D. On January 14, 1894, Ellen White wrote directly to A. T. Jones and probably included a copy of her December 23, 1893, letter.¹⁶ When Jones received the correspondence, probably during February 1894, he "wept like a child." Prescott, who had vigorously supported Anna Rice's claims, also received a copy of the correspondence and was similarly affected. After receiving Ellen White's testimony, Jones and Prescott did what they could to remove the Rice testimonies from circulation. Jones showed himself to be a true pastor in a gentle and encouraging letter to Anna Rice. An encouraging aspect of this story is the redemption of Anna Rice. She accepted Ellen White's testimony and continued as a Bible worker throughout the remainder of her life.¹⁷
- E. Ellen White reiterated her counsel to Jones in a March 15, 1894, letter. In this letter she had important counsel about how God worked in the inspiration process.
 1. She gave important counsel on how God works with people in day to day life. "God does not generally lay out in His revelations the minute transactions of life. His Word, the Guidebook, deals with great and elevated themes, opening up the principles which should underlie all our actions, and presenting them in language of such simplicity that all may comprehend them."¹⁸
 2. In her March 15 letter, Ellen White compared Anna Rice's style of visions with what she had experienced during the early period of her experience: "This pointing out of the imperfections and wrongs of individuals is of exactly the same character as in the false messages not only in Maine [during 1845] but in New York, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts [in 1845 and 1846]."¹⁹
- F. On March 16, 1894, one day after writing Jones, Ellen White wrote a more general letter on the Anna Rice issue that laid out further principles to follow regarding prophetic claimants.
 1. Ellen White wrote that Anna Rice had taken statements she had made and pushed them further than was warranted. "With much that is truth there is mingled error that is accepted in its extreme meaning, and acted upon by persons of excitable temperament."²⁰
 2. She gave valuable advice about gaining wide counsel before accepting professed special revelation. "The greatest care should be exercised concerning those who claim to receive revelations from God. There needs to be much close watching and much praying. Those who are acting a part in the great work for these last days need to counsel together in regard to every new thing that shall be introduced, for no one man's mind is to be left to judge."
 3. Good judgment needs to take precedence over emotion. "Beware of making strong expressions which will lead unbalanced minds to think that they have wonderful light from God. . . . A certain class are sure to be af-

16 Ellen G. White to A. T. Jones, January 14, 1894 (Letter 37a, 1894), Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.

17 A. T. Jones to Anna Rice, May 24, 1894 (White Document File 363a, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.)

18 White to "Brethren and Sisters," December 23, 1893.

19 Ellen G. White to A. T. Jones, March 15, 1894 (Letter 103, 1894), Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.

20 Ellen G. White to "Dear Brethren and Sisters," March 16, 1894 (Letter 6a, 1894), Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.

fectured, and influenced to set in motion that which can no more be controlled than can an impetuous horse. Once let impulse and emotion get the mastery over calm judgment, and there may be altogether too much speed, even in traveling a right road Not once should feeling be allowed to get the mastery over judgment."

4. Ellen White wrote that wherever God is working with power, "we must watch." "The arch deceiver is waiting and ready to set in operation various devices for misleading people. If possible he will mingle the counterfeit with the genuine so that, in the effort to separate the two, souls will be imperiled. Whenever and wherever God works, Satan and his angels are on the ground."
5. She indicated that Rice's visions had supplanted the Bible. "The truth of the Word of God is of sufficient authority and power. It bears its own credentials. The testimonies given me of God are designed to call the attention of the people to a Thus Saith the Lord."
6. Finally, she indicated that a good part of the problem was caused by overconfidence in A. T. Jones. As pastor of the Battle Creek Church and recognized leader in presenting righteousness by faith, his statements had gained an authority that was misplaced. Ellen White wrote, "Brother Jones is in positive danger, and his brethren do not see that danger. They are placing the servant where God should be. The Lord has given Brother Jones a message to prepare a people to stand in the day of God; but when the people shall look to Elder Jones instead of to God, they will become weak instead of strong."
- G. Ellen White wrote to both Prescott and Jones on April 16, 1894, to give counsel on how to deal with Anna Rice and the troubles caused by their support of her experience.²¹ She laid out sever-

al additional principles from her March 16 letter that are applicable to those who today have a similar experience.

1. She urged Prescott and Jones to do nothing rash regarding Rice or her writings. She even went so far as to say that "where they have already been sent out with the sanction of responsible men, let them remain. To make abrupt moves now would do harm." She wrote that nothing should be done to harm Rice.
2. She then indicated that just because professed prophetic writings seem to have "nothing objectionable in them" is no reason to "accept these writings." "You seem to think I should be able to point out just where the particularly objectionable sentiments lie. There is nothing so very apparent, in that which has been written; you have been able to discover nothing objectionable; but this is not reason for using these writings as you have done." Ellen White indicated that there was nothing in Rice's writings that deserved serious church attention. "I fail to see anything in the writings of Sr. Phillips of a character that should create such movements as have been made. And if things of this nature are to be so eagerly grasped, you will have plenty of them, varied in some respects." In other words, to encourage those who think they are receiving special revelations stimulates more such activity with the implication that the result will be imbalance, fanaticism, and looking to something other than the Bible as authority.
3. She urged the ministers to "educate the people to have a sound, solid experience and do not create in them an appetite for something new and strange and startling. These are the very things which those who are weak in moral power crave as the liquor drinker craves liquor."

²¹ Ellen G. White to W. W. Prescott and A. T. Jones, April 16, 1894

(Letter 68, 1894), Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.

4. She reiterated the necessity of preaching the Bible as the authority.

IV. Summary and Conclusions

- A. Anna Rice was sincere, but she confused personal illumination with prophetic revelation.
- B. Her confusion was encouraged by the Rices and A. T. Jones, the people she most respected. They were to a large degree responsible for things getting out of control.
- C. Anna Rice's testimonies exaggerated Biblical and Ellen White testimonies and were judgmental in an inappropriate and incorrect manner.
- D. Her strong statements, particularly in the area of adornment, were attached to a genuine revival where the Spirit of God was working. Because they were incorrectly attributed as special revelation, they were given inspiration authority. The same revival might have happened even if the Rice testimonies had not been read. The reading of the testimonies later produced confusion when it was shown that they were not special revelation.
- E. Perhaps most dangerous was the mixing of Ellen White's messages with those of Anna Rice. With many Adventists uncertain about Rice's experience and the way that Jones, Prescott, and others failed to clearly define which was which, the result was suspicion of any new testimonies.
- F. Ellen White showed a remarkable redemptive attitude toward Rice. The result was her continued usefulness in service for God.
- G. It is good that this story had an essentially happy ending with an averted crisis. The story could have been very different if certain elements had been different—if Ellen White had had the wrong attitude, if A. T. Jones had refused to accept Ellen White's testimony, if Jones had not been redemptive toward Anna Rice, or if Rice has stubbornly insisted that she was a true prophet.
- H. This story is a particularly poignant object lesson for those who confuse illumination with

special revelation. Ellen White laid out a number of helpful principles in approaching the issue of prophetic claimants who are themselves the source of their revelations.