

Ellen White and The French Revolution

During the past decennia some people have thought and expressed that Ellen White in her historical description in the book “The Great Controversy” has made unfortunate mistakes. One of those accusers, William S. Peterson, wrote in “Spectrum” - the Autumn edition of 1970, an article with the title: “A Textual and Historical Study of Ellen G. White’s account of the French Revolution.”

1. As to the sources Ellen White made use of, Peterson raises a leading question on page 60: *“The question I wish to raise is this: Do these historians have any attitude or bias in common which might explain why Ellen White was attracted to them?”* This question touches a fundamental issue since it eclipses the fact that Ellen White was guided; shown pictures and given representations regarding the actions of human beings in history, and therefore with this in mind this question is quite inappropriate for we may then expect that she selected passages that were in harmony with her illuminated understanding and not because they agreed with a possible personal common attitude or bias.

2. On page 63 we read: *“However, on the larger question of Mrs. White’s intellectual, rather than verbal, indebtedness to her sources, it must be said that she followed them very closely and drew most of her material from only a few pages in each. It is difficult, therefore, to know how to interpret Mrs. White’s statement that these scenes are based primarily on visions.”*

When Ellen White only drew most of her material from only a few pages in each, then this may well indicate that she has been very careful in selecting only the best parts that were in good harmony with her visions and expressed her guided views correctly.

3. Then we find on page 64 mentioned that “factual errors” were made in the 1888 edition that were, however, corrected in 1911. An example is the statement made in 1888, that the beginning of the St. Bartholomew Massacre was signaled by the tolling of “the great palace bell.” We read: *“It was pointed out to Mrs. White that this was inaccurate, and in 1911 the phrase was changed to “a bell” (p. 272)... In fact, the error was a result of a simple misreading by Mrs. White of her original source before 1888. Wylie (volume two, p. 600), upon whom Mrs. White was drawing at this point in the chapter, wrote that “the signal for the massacre was to be the tolling of the great bell of the Palace of Justice.” Two pages later in his book, Wylie explained that in the event it was the bell of St. Germain l’Auxerois which was rung. Obviously Mrs. White had read the first statement but not the second, for she displayed confusion also about the time of night when the bell sounded.”*

Inaccuracy, error, misreading, confusion... these are great and daring words towards one who was divinely enlightened. How can such words ever be said? In order to use these words in this connection, we truly must know for sure what exactly happened on that cruel massacre day for if we do not know the facts we would do better to keep silence. And if the facts cannot be determined for sure then there is no basis whatsoever to use such words. But if, however, we, nevertheless, venture to use such words, we would surely mislead ourselves dramatically.

Moreover, if God shows, by way of a vision or otherwise, historical facts and information, does that have then to be completely in line with that which historians have written? The Bible says: *“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth...”* 2 Chron. 16:9. The everliving and omnipresent heavenly Father, Who never sleeps nor slumbers, knows precisely everything far better than all good historians together, and if He guided Ellen White and revealed historical information to her, in His own good way, how then could historians ever be made the measuring rod to determine whether that what she wrote is true or

not? Historians have their limitations; their lack of sufficient or proper information and they often fail to catch the right tone in describing the developments of past human affairs, and among each other they sometimes differ widely in their reports and they may give a rather subjectively coloured presentation according to their own personal learning, thinking, ideas and ability.

Now if we look at that dreadful massacre that took place on Sunday, August 24, 1572, as far as the facts under discussion are concerned, we find that historians paint us different pictures. And certainly, during awful life and death scenes; moments of horror and panic, it is not always easy to reconstruct in detail that what really happened. But in any case, it should be clear that the description of historians can never be used as a criteria with regard to divinely revealed information, and most certainly not when there is no unity of presentation among historians.

As to the signal for the massacre, a good possibility could perhaps be that Catherine, who had taken the lead in this cruel plot, waited for the stroke of twelve of the nearby clock of St. Germain l'Auxerrois and then gave order to ring the Palace (of Justice) bell as the sign for the assault and that thereupon the other bells of the city started tolling.

We read: *"The tolling of the bell of the Palace of Justice, so it was decided, would be the sign for murder... Twelve dull strokes were heard of the clock of St. Germain l'Auxerrois. The festal day of the holy Bartholomew was begun... the cruel Queen, at midnight, ordered that the sign for the assault be given. There resounded the ominous tones through the air... The tolling of many bells sounded through the atmosphere and called the sons of the holy church to the crusade against the heretics, the Huguenots, the apostates. All, all would be exterminated."*¹

Don Fernando de la Mina was right on the spot in the Louvre and thus a close eye-witness of the proceedings of the massacre. His story seems to be trustworthy since the historical details can be verified. He was, at that very moment when at midnight the bells started tolling, together with his staunch Protestant friend Palissy, looking down into the streets of Paris from their studio window of the uppermost floor in the Louvre and he declared that the Palace bell was heard first, while the nearby bell from the Tower of St. Germaine l'Auxerrois very quickly followed.² That the Germain-bell is mentioned as nearby, clearly suggests that the Palace bell that rang first, was not so close by, which perfectly agrees with the Palace of Justice bell, being away from the Louvre at a greater distance.

Another witness to the events on St. Bartholomew's Day as a youth was De Thou, statesman and historian (1553-1617), and he relates that the Chevalier d'Angouleme said: "Cheer up my friends! Let us do thoroughly that which we have begun. The king commands it." De Thou then states: "He frequently repeated these words, and as soon as they had caused the bell of the palace clock to ring, on every side arose the cry, "To arms!" and the people ran to the house of Coligny."³ This witness also clearly points out that it was the ringing of the palace bell that signaled the slaughter.

A few other sources tell us: *"At the stroke of twelve of the tower-church-clock, all Huguenots that could be found in Paris were suddenly, with help of the military power, murdered in a horrible way."*⁴

*"The tower-church-clock of St. Germain struck the midnight hour; suddenly a pistol shot rang out from the palace: the agreed sign; the massacre begins; Coligny, the noblest, is the first victim."*⁵

*"In the night between the 23rd and 24th of August 1572, just after midnight, by a pistol shot the sign was given for the horrible murder. At once the bells of the palace started tolling..."*⁶

*“On the night of St. Bartholomew, between the 23rd and 24th of August, the castle bell tolled. This was the concerted signal for the destruction of all the Huguenots present in Paris.”*⁷

*“...be ready for action at the tolling of church bells at three o'clock... at the tocsin's sound their men were to slay every Huguenot they could find... Catherine yielded and ordered the tocsin to be rung.”*⁸

*“It was decided that Coligny should die first. As soon as possible after midnight by a pistol shot and the tolling of the Palace bell the sign should be given and immediately the conspirators would meet and begin the slaughter.”*⁹

*“Towards midnight everything was regulated by the gang. In the following St. Bartholomew's day a pistol shot was fired. The Louvre bell starts tolling. The murderous scenery begins.”*¹⁰

*“In the night of August 24th the massacre began. Coligni and other prominent Huguenots were first slain by the Duke of Guise and his associates. Then one of the great bells of the city rang out the signal to the other conspirators.”*¹¹

*“At length the fatal hour had arrived. All things were ready. The tocsin, at midnight, tolled the signal of destruction.”*¹²

*“Far from allowing matters to take their own course, Catherine meant to keep control of them. To begin with, she did not wait until the Law Courts bell rang at the agreed hour, an hour and a half later. She ordered the tocsin to be sounded at once. She ordered the big bell of St. Germain l'Auxerrois to be tolled...”*¹³

*“After Coligny had been murdered, a bell in the tower of the royal palace, at the hour of midnight, gave the signal to the assembled companies of citizens for a general massacre of the Huguenots...”*¹⁴

It is obvious that there is no clear harmony as to the given sign for the slaughter. Just as there is no certainty about the total amount of victims, that ranges between some 6.000 and 100.000, so no one can with certainty say, of other aspects too, what really is truth. It is far from fair then to accuse Ellen White of errors because she should have misread Wylie, the source upon whom, as it is asserted, she had been drawing at this point.

It is very interesting that Dr. C. P. Hofstede de Groot in his preface to the Dutch edition of Wylie's 'History of Protestantism' makes clear that in case of the description of the night of Bartholomew, Wylie has not always been followed since he contradicts unchallengeable testimonies.¹⁵ Now if this is really the case, how then can Ellen White be accused of errors because of misreading Wylie's description?

Would it not be possible then that Ellen White, instead of misreading the source, knew better? Dr. Hofstede de Groot, who prepared the Dutch translation, has included the passage that the bell of the palace of Justice would give the sign for general murder,¹⁶ while 'the second statement' is left out! That someone was sent at two o'clock of the morning to ring the bell of St. Germain l'Auxerois is not mentioned in Wylie's Dutch edition. Dr. Hofstede de Groot possibly seems to have had a good reason for not including that second passage. And since many other historians do not mention this either, it may be doubtful indeed if this is really what happened.¹⁷ In the Dutch edition we read further down that the execution had begun and more bells were tolling: 'The Louvre bell tolled and other bells added their gloomy tones.'¹⁸

Now if it is really true that Wylie's description, as to the timing, as well as the given sign, as explained in that second statement, is not quite according to that which actually happened, then it is just remarkable that Ellen White did not blindly follow that source at hand, in this very respect. How particular then that she did not pay any notice to 'the second statement' about the time and the St. Germain-bell. This is then certainly pleading in favour of the fact that she was guided by a higher hand.

4. The author of the “Spectrum” article continues: *“This is not the only instance I have found of carelessness by Mrs. White in transcribing material from her sources.”* p. 64.

Can we ever maintain that Ellen White had to transcribe word for word the sources she consulted, including also possible inaccuracies? It looks to be more a matter of carefulness if she avoids unjust or doubtful passages.

And then we read: *“I am not speaking, of course, of minor changes in wording or punctuation, for these are not worth our notice; but obvious inaccuracies of fact, in their cumulative effect, undermine the historical basis of the chapter.”* p. 64.

This sounds very confident and certainly gives the impression that there are indeed rather big factual mistakes. But the only appropriate answer to this would be: Prove it convincingly and then we will take this accusation seriously! The author then continues with presenting an example and we may well expect in this context as an illustration of a clear factual mistake and not a minor case of wording. We read: *“In 1888, for example, Mrs White wrote of “the breviaries of the Old and New Testaments,” a statement which was later corrected to read “breviaries, missals, and the Old and New Testaments” (1911 edition, p. 276). This is an error in transcription which would be made by someone unfamiliar with the nature of breviaries.”* p. 64.

Now is this really a clear factual mistake? There are several breviaries and they are of nature mainly based on the Bible – the Old and New Testaments. They usually contain ‘the Proper of the Season’ or Scripture lessons; the Psalms and other Old and New Testament passages. We read about the breviaries that Pope Pius X took measure regarding the uninterrupted reading of the books of the Holy Bible.¹⁹

So the Bible, the Old and New Testament, comes quite close to the breviaries and we fear that it will be a little hard to maintain that Ellen White made a clear and significant mistake.

5. The next charge in the “Spectrum” article reads: *“Most of her errors, however, are in the direction of exaggeration. In 1888 she had spoken of the “millions” who died in the French Revolution; in 1911 this was scaled down to “multitudes” (p. 284).* p. 65.

Is it really unlikely that two million people died in the fierce and bloody French Revolution? Is this amount truly exaggerated? There were round 25 million people living in France and could it not be true that after that terrible period of about ten years, round 2 million had lost their lives so that 23 million of the 25 had survived that bloody period of massacre? Let us look at a few historical statements to get an impression. The numbers of deaths are really impressive. We read for instance: *“Before the Vendéans were subdued by Marshal Hoche (July, 1796), half a million lives had been lost in this new religious war.”*²⁰

There we have half a million already, and this war was only a part of the cruel butcheries that were raging during the orderless period of the Revolution. We only need three more of such parts that would justify Ellen White’s description of 1888, and this is not unthinkable if we consider that the horrible massacres during the revolutionary period often went on without trial and mercy. No one was spared, neither the aged nor young children. Almost the whole of France was at times more like one big scenery of ruthless slaughter. We are informed: *“They put down opposition without mercy, sometimes with enthusiastic excess.”*²¹

A zealous commissioner, Jean-Baptiste Carrier, declared *“that France could not feed its rapidly growing population, and that it would be desirable to cure the excess by cutting down all nobles, priests, merchants, and magistrates. At Nantes he objected to trial as a waste of time; all these suspects (he commanded the judge) must be eliminated in a couple of hours, or I will have you and your colleagues shot... the prisons at Nantes were crowded almost to asphyxiation by those arrested and condemned... ‘We will make France a graveyard’ he vowed... ‘we shall all be guillotined, one after another.’”*²²

Manon Roland wrote on August 28, 1793: *“France has become a vast Golgotha of carnage, an arena of horrors, where her children tear and destroy one another...Never can history paint these dreadful times, or the monsters that fill them with their barbarities.”*²³

Thousands were guillotined: *“Fouquier-Tinville remarked that heads were falling ‘like slates from a roof.’”*²⁴

The different parties, Girondins, Jacobins and Royalists murdered each other. It was at a given moment a matter of: *“to slaughter or being slaughtered.”*²⁵

In 1792, for instance, the September massacre took place, *“in which numbers of royalists were killed, not only in Paris but also in Orleans, Lyons and elsewhere.”*²⁶

In March, 1793, the revolutionary tribunal was set up to deal with all political offenders. *“Jacobin deputies were sent into the provinces to find suspected persons and once suspected and denounced there was little hope... At Nantes the massacres took the form of tying the condemned together...and then throwing them into the sea.”*²⁷

The prisons were terribly crowded. We are informed that at a certain moment there were as many as 400.000 prisoners.²⁸

Even in small places out in the country the cruel massacres were raging. To give an impression, here is just part of one example of Bedouin (or Bédoin) a little place, some 20 miles north-east of Avignon. We read the following report: *“The details of cruelty which are continually arriving from France are truly incredible... And this day, Jan. 9th, 1795 we read the following account... Goupilleau of Montaign, just returned from his mission in the Southern Departments, gave the following account of the horrors exercised upon the inhabitants of the Commune of Bedouin...: ‘A young maiden, of the name of Saumont, only eighteen years of age, waited upon a Deputy, to demand the release of her father. ‘From whence comest thou?’ asked the barbarian. ‘From Bedouin,’ answered she. She was immediately put under an arrest, and two days after, she mounted the scaffold, along with her father...You shrink with horror at this narrative, and had you been like me, at Bedouin, you would carry with you to the grave the remembrance of the cruelties of which that Commune had been the theatre and the victim. At Orange I ordered a hole filled with five hundred dead bodies to be closed up. I also ordered some others to be filled, which were destined to receive twelve thousand human victims. Four thousand loads of quick lime had already been brought to consume those bodies. In the same Commune, they guillotined an old woman, in her eighty-seventh year, and who had been delirious six years, and infants between ten and eighteen years of age.”*

That similar horrible butcheries took also place elsewhere in the country, is clearly attested, for we read further: *“...horrible assassinations are still prevailing (July 1795) to a considerable degree, particularly in the provinces of Languedoc and Provence. Aix, Nismes, and Tarrascon, are much afflicted in this way.”*²⁹

We should not underestimate the heavy losses of human lives that were suffered throughout the country during this bloody and graceless period. If we take the whole period of the French Revolution into account with its several dramatic and bloody outbursts on the political, social, economic and religious levels, and if we add all the victims together, we would not at all be surprised that around two million people lost their lives during this horrible and disorderly period of time. Now if there are some that are not yet convinced and find Ellen White’s “millions” still exaggerated, here is another statement from the German historian, Friedrich Oehninger, and let them make a fair calculation: *“...in September 1793 there were no less than 40.000 revolutionary tribunals, thousands of hangman’s assistants and places where daily 30 or 40 people were murdered...”*³⁰

Now if there were 40.000 tribunals with thousands of hangman’s assistants and thousands of places where daily 30 or 40 were killed, how many murdered victims would there be then after this killing has been carried on for several months? Let us make a very moderate

calculation. With so many places with a killing rate of 30 or 40 victims per day, it will be very moderate indeed if we calculate for the whole period of 'the reign of terror' only a total average of just one hundred victims for each tribunal. If we multiply then the 40.000 tribunals with 100 victims each, we get a total of 4 million people who lost their lives. How real and trustworthy then is Ellen White's description that "millions" died in the French Revolution. Her vision about this ruthless revolution seems to be very true indeed, without any taint of exaggeration.

6. Then the following imputation runs this way: *"An even more revealing inaccuracy is one which was never corrected. In the sixteenth century, she wrote, 'thousands upon thousands' of Protestants found safety in flight' from France (1911 edition, p. 278). Then the following paragraph is a lengthy quotation from Wylie. Had she read Wylie more carefully, she would have noticed, immediately preceding the statement which she quoted, this sentence: 'Meanwhile another, and yet another, rose up and fled, till the band of self-confessed and self-expatriated disciples of the Gospel swelled to between 400 and 500' (Wylie, volume two, p. 212). Wylie himself is given to hyperbole in discussing Catholic persecutions; and when one compounds his exaggerations with Mrs. White's, the distance from historical reality is very great indeed."* p. 65. And in a note, no 25, it is further explained: *"This particular error by Mrs. White is an interesting one, because it is possible to reconstruct how she misread Wylie. Wylie cites the 400 or 500 'self-expatriated disciples of the Gospel' and then goes on to assert: 'The men who were now fleeing from France were the first to tread a path which was to be trodden again and again by hundreds of thousands of their countrymen in years to come. During the following two centuries and [a] half these scenes were renewed at short intervals.' Mrs. White reduces all of this information to one sentence and thereby distorts it: 'Thousands upon thousands found safety in flight; and this continued for two hundred and fifty years after the opening of the Reformation.' In other words, Mrs. White removes Wylie's 'hundreds of thousands' of Protestant exiles from 'the following two centuries and [a] half' and instead places this enormous group in the sixteenth century."*

Now this allegation concerns not so much a stated historical inaccuracy by Ellen White, but it is rather a deviation from the description of Wylie, whom she quoted to some extent. It seems to be that it is expected that Ellen White should have followed the wording of Wylie and since this was not exactly being done, she is accused of 'error' and that she 'distorts' a sentence. It looks as if Wylie has been set up in this matter as a criteria to which Ellen White had to conform, in order to have been correct. But this is not a healthy approach. Ellen White was free to use her own wording and to choose those passages from historians that she found appropriate in order to enhance the validity of her description for the general public.

Let us now have a look at Ellen White's statement: *"Thousands upon thousands found safety in flight; and this continued for two hundred and fifty years after the opening of the Reformation."* (p. 278)

Is this exaggerated? As a matter of fact France was one of the most fiercely afflicted countries by religious crusades, persecutions and wars. And by divine providence many faithful believers fled from their country and the true Gospel was spread that way by these witnesses to many places.

In the 16th Century there were indeed, at various moments, many Protestants who left their country. During the reign of Francis I, (1515-1547) we read, for instance, that the Evangelical Church of Meaux was dispersed *"and by her refugees the seed of the new faith was sown everywhere..."*³¹ And because of a bloody persecution in Provence in 1545 we read: *"Some thousands passed over the mountains to Geneva..."*³²

Since the massacre at Vassy in 1562, up to the time of Henry III, 1574-1589, eight religious wars *"depopulated and destroyed"* France.³³ Then, right after the massacre of St.

Bartholomew, August 24th, 1572, we read: *“At the same time a new stream of emigrants begins to leave the country in such a measure that about half a year after the Bartholomew’s night, in London alone were forty fugitive pastors from Normandy and Picardy.”*³⁴ These pastors in those days were in general faithful shepherds who would not easily leave behind their flocks to their fate. It would be self-evident then that these believers were scattered and also had taken to flight, for we read: *“Overcome with indescribable fright the remained Huguenots left the country; all roads were crowded with refugees who tried to escape to England, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Germany.”*³⁵ Another author writes: *“After the massacres large numbers of French Protestants, particularly from Normandy and other provinces on the English Channel, made their way to safety in English territory.”*³⁶ When large numbers fled and all roads were crowded, we can speak of a great exodus, and we can therefore, without any exaggeration, confidently say that ‘thousands upon thousands found safety in flight,’ just as Ellen White described it. But not only so during the 16th Century; Ellen White added: *“and this continued for two hundred and fifty years after the opening of the Reformation.”* GC p. 278. Is this addition then perhaps an exaggeration?

We read: *“In 1685, the Edict of Nantes, the great charter of Huguenot rights, was revoked. Emigration went on in spite of hindrances placed in its way. Not far from a quarter of a million of refugees escaped from France to enrich England, Holland, and other countries with the fruits of their industries.”*³⁷ In the year 1697 again a new persecution started in France. Claude Brousson, a Protestant leader, fled to Switzerland in 1696. *“Still in the next year the persecution broke out anew in France; in Languedoc alone were 40.000 Protestants who had to leave their native country.”*³⁸

During the reign of Louis XIV, 1643-1715 the Huguenot Church was reduced to a persecuted, martyr church. Louis *“drove thousands of their numbers into exile, to the lasting gain of England, Holland, Prussia, and America.”*³⁹

*“Already at his accession to the throne Louis XIV had begun to oppress the Protestants and hundred thousands of them had sought refuge in Switzerland, Germany, England and the Netherlands. At the repeal of the edict of Nantes this emigration was prohibited. However fifty thousand families still succeeded to escape.”*⁴⁰ In the 17th Century France lost during the reign of Louis XIV alone: *“more than fifty thousand families that were succesful in passing the boundaries... But thousands upon thousands, as we have seen, followed their shepherds and enriched the countries that took them in with their diligence and industrial art.”*⁴¹

*“Henry IV granted religious toleration to his Protestant subjects by the Edict of Nantes (1598), but Louis XIV revoked it in 1685. During periods of persecution, approximately 300,000 French Protestants fled to Prussia, Switzerland, Holland, England, and the Dutch and English colonies.”*⁴²

*“Finally, on Oct. 18, 1685, Louis XIV pronounced the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. As a result, over the next several years, France lost more than 250.000 of its Protestant citizens. They fled primarily to England, Prussia, Holland, or America.”*⁴³

*“At least 200.000 French Huguenots left France between the end of the 16th and the first half of the 17th century. After 1520 until the end of the 17th century: 300.000 - 400.000 French migrated.”*⁴⁴

If we not only just read refugee numbers such as ‘thousands’ but when also even ‘a quarter of a million’ is mentioned and ‘hundred thousands’ then again we must conclude that Ellen White did not in the least exaggerate when she wrote: ‘thousands upon thousands found safety in flight.’

7. Furthermore we read in the “Spectrum” article: “*Still another issue that must concern us is whether Mrs. White consistently omitted or suppressed certain kinds of evidence which she found in her sources.*” p. 65.

We would almost ask: What is the purpose of this statement? Should we regard Ellen White as one who omitted or even suppressed evidence? If this issue would have a fair basis then this would touch Mrs. White’s integrity and honesty. It would affect her veracity and credibility. But this issue does not prove anything.⁴⁵ It reveals to us more about the author, who raised it, rather than tell us about Ellen White. We must, therefore, leave this issue only to the responsibility of the one who formulated it this way.

8. The “Spectrum” article is rounded up with some information about Ellen White’s supposed exaggeration of the role of Catholic clergymen in the attack on religious institutions and ideals. Now this is also a matter we should leave to the author’s responsibility. There are several sources that bear out Ellen White on this point and, moreover, she was not only divinely enlightened about the conflict of the ages between good and evil, but also guided in her presentation. Who are we then to criticise her?

Endnotes:

1 W. Andringa Gz., Gekeurd en Gelouterd, *Het leven, lijden en sterven der Martelaren*, Joh. De Liefde, Utrecht, 1895, dl. II, p. 362-364. (The translation here and throughout from Dutch and German sources are my own.)

2 Don Fernando de la Mina, *My Escape from the Auto De Fé at Valladolid, October 1559*. Reprint Shiloh Publ., Poland, Maine, USA, 1997, p. 106.

Don Fernando de la Mina, a nobleman of Spain, escaped to France and he bequeathed his son with a sealed document in which his life story was told, founded on historic fact and superscribed as follows: “*A faithful record of my Providential Escape from the Torture and Fire of the Inquisition at Valladolid in the year of Our Lord 1559.*”

Don Fernando de la Mina, being a skillful artist, was, after his escape to France, employed in Paris as Embroiderer to Her Majesty the Queen, Regent of France, and occupied in 1572, the year of the Massacre, a comfortable apartment in the Louvre. During the evening of the slaughter, he was together with his close friend, Messer Bernard Palissy, a Huguenot and talented artist, who produced exquisite pottery. (Cf. Sylvia Lennie England, *The Massacre of Saint Bartholomew*, London 1938, p. 88. Henri Noguères, *La Saint Barthélemy*, trans., by Claire Eliane Engel, London, 1962, p. 69.)

Don Fernando de la Mina writes: “*Palissy and I stood and looked from our studio window down into the streets of Paris that evening and, as we looked, they seemed to us unusually quiet as if the city were waiting for some grim happening! Late into the night we stood there, Palissy and I, watching the traffic grow less and less, as the streets become more and more deserted. The lights in the houses were extinguished one by one as the unsuspecting inhabitants retired to their rest, and presently all Paris seemed to be wrapped in peaceful slumber. It was very nearly midnight. ‘What’s that?’ suddenly asked my companion, as he drew back from the window in sudden alarm – ‘What’s that?’ ‘It’s the Palace Bell’ I replied – and the words were no sooner out of my mouth than the echoing tocsin rang out from the Tower of St. Germaine l’Auxerrois nearby...*”

3 De Thou, *Histoire des choses arrivees de son temps*, Paris, 1659, p. 658 sqq.

4 J. H. Landwehr, *Christelijke Encyclopaedie*, Kampen, 1925, dl. 1, p. 239

4 H. Lankamp, *Leerplan voor de Scholen met de Bijbel, Geschiedenis van Kerk en Zending*, Groningen, P. Noordhoff, 1914, deel I B, p. 223.

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- 5 H. A. van der Mast, *Beelden en Schetsen uit de Kerkgeschiedenis*, Amsterdam, H. A. van Bottenburg, 1906, p. 312.
- 7 Professor Kurtz, *Church History*, New York, Funk & Wagnalls, 1889, vol. II, p. 328.
- 8 Will and Ariel Durant, *The Story of Civilization, VII, The Age of Reason Begins*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1961, p. 351.
- 9 Dr. D. P. Rossouw, *Mede-erfgenamen van Christus, Geschiedenis van de vervolgingen der Christelijke kerk*, Amsterdam, Höveker & Zoon, 1894, p. 614.
- 10 R. Husen, *Geschiedenis der Hervorming in de 15de, 16de en 17de Eeuw*, Doesburg, J. C. van Schenk Brill, 1903, p. 550.
- 11 George Park Fisher, *History of the Christian Church*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916, p. 339.
- 12 John Dowling, *The History of Romanism*, 14th ed., New York, Edward Walker, 114 Fulton Street, 1847, p. 588.
- 13 Henri Noguères, (La Saint Barthélemy) *The Massacre of Saint Bartholomew*, transl., Claire Eliane Engel, London, 1962, pp. 79, 80. As to this statement, there is no source mentioned nor any reference given.
- 14 *Chambers's Encyclopaedia*, Philadelphia, Lippincott Company, 1895, vol. 1, p. 765.
- 15 "Het meest heb ik de auteur kunnen volgen in zijn verhaal van de lotgevallen van het Protestantisme in Frankrijk – ofschoon niet in zijn beschouwing van de Bartholomeusnacht, die geheel tegen onwraakbare getuigenissen indruist." *De Geschiedenis van het Protestantisme, opnieuw verhaald door Dr. J. A. Wylie. Voor Nederland vrij bewerkt door Dr. C. P. Hofstede de Groot*, Leiden, A. W. Sijthoff, 1881, Derde Deel, Voorrede.
- 16 'Dan zou de klok van het Gerechtshof het teken geven tot de algemene moord.' J. A. Wylie, transl., C. P. Hofstede de Groot, Deel. 3, p. 87.
- 17 It is noteworthy that Wylie refers to De Thou (Jacques-Auguste) for this information who writes, however, without giving any credit for it: "Therefore the Queen laying hold of his present heat, lest by delaying it should slack, commands that the sign which was to have been given at break of day should be hastened, and that the Bell of the nearer Church of St. German Auxerrois should be tolled." Meredith McGann, (Project Assistant, National History Day.) *The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre: A Religious Reaction in 16th Century France*. Excerpt 2.
- Philippe Erlanger writes: "The bell of the Palace [of Justice] would give the signal," and gives as source: *Archives Nationales, registers of the Hôtel de Ville*. He also writes: "The queen-mother suddenly made up her mind that the Palace of Justice was too far away, and that the tocsin, the signal, should sound from the church of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois." No reference is given, however, and no source mentioned. (*St. Bartholomew's Night [Le Massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy]*, transl. by Patrick O'Brian, Pantheon Books, [1962], pp. 151, 154.)
- Sylvia Lennie England mentions twice that the 'Palais du Justice' bell was to give the signal for the attack but she also describes that it was the church bell of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois that clanged out the tocsin, but again, there is no reference or proof given here either. (*The Massacre of Saint Bartholomew*, London, 1938, pp. 97, 101, 103.)
- 18 "'Men begon.' zo als Guise antwoordde, 'reeds overal in de stad te executeren.' De klok van 't Louvre luidde, de overige klokken voegden hare sombere tonen daarbij.'" J. A. Wylie, trans., C. P. Hofstede de Groot, Deel 3, p. 88.
- 19 *Katholieke Encyclopaedie*, Amsterdam, Antwerpen, 1950, dl. 6, p. 120.
- 20 Will and Ariel Durant, *The Story of Civilization, XI, The Age of Napoleon*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1975, p. 72.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 68.
- 22 *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 69.
- 23 *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 67.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- 25 Friedrich Oehninger, *Geschiedenis des Christendoms*, Rotterdam, 1899, p. 456.
- 26 N.n., *Concise History of the World*, P. R. Gawthorn, Ltd., Farrington St., E.C.4. GB., 1935, p. 558.

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- 27 Ibid., p. 561.
- 28 Georg Weber, *Lehr- und Handbuch der Weltgeschichte*, Leipzig, Wilhelm Engelmann, 1921, Band 4, p. 44.
- 29 David Simpson, *Key to the Prophecies*, Halifax, Milner & Sowerby, n.d., pp. 379, 380.
- 30 Friedrich Oehninger, p. 456.
- 31 J. Chambon, *Geschiedenis ener Martelaarskerk*, Goes, Oosterbaan & Le Cointre N.V., 1951, p. 31.
- 32 Ibid., p. 33.
- 33 Ibid., pp. 56, 57.
- 34 Ibid., 75.
- 35 W. Andringa Gz., p. 374, 375. Cf. Adolf Streckfuss, *De Geschiedenis der Wereld*, Leiden, 1871, dl. 7, p. 329.
- 36 Robert M. Kingdon, *Myths about the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres 1572-1576*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1988, p. 126, Cf., p. 21.
- 37 George Park Fisher, p. 494. Cf., Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, New York, 1926, p. 556.
- 38 Dr. D. P. Rossouw, p. 659.
- 39 Williston Walker, p. 441.
- 40 Friedrich Oehninger, p. 452.
- 41 R. Husen, p. 630, 631.
- ⁴² *Encyclopedia of American History*, article Huguenots.
- ⁴³ *Encyclopedia Britannica, Micropaedia*, 15th ed., Vol. V, p. 189, article Huguenots.
- ⁴⁴ Oshel. Com. *History of International Migration*, (Source Credit - to the History of International Migration Leiden University, Netherlands) 1.4 How Many? Western Europe, France.
- 45 Only two, rather weak suggestions are presented. We read: "*To give a striking example of the irreligious spirit of the Revolution, Mrs. White quoted a blasphemous remark by a person she called 'one of the priests of the new order.'* The clear implication is that this individual is one of the 'apostate priests' to whom she had referred earlier on the same page. Yet Alison (volume two, p. 90), from whom she borrowed this anecdote, merely identified the speaker as 'the comedian Monort.' A cleric he was not, except perhaps in some extravagantly metaphorical sense." p. 65.
- That it is a 'clear implication' that Ellen White regards this individual, whom she called 'one of the priests of the new order,' as one of the 'apostate priests' she referred to earlier, may well be possible but not necessarily true since the words 'apostate priests' were not her own words but part of Scott's quotation, and, moreover, she does not write: one of *these* (or *those*) priests, but simply 'one of the priests of the new order.' The clarity of this implication may therefore not be shared by everyone. Furthermore, that Alison identified the speaker as a comedian, does not exclude the fact that he could have been a priest.
- As for the second example, we read: "*Another story, which she found in Scott, was altered basically in its significance by a similar omission of an important detail. The Scott quotation as printed in The Great Controversy (1911 edition, p. 274) is as follows:*
- [The] constitutional bishop of Paris was brought forward to play the principal part in the most impudent and scandalous farce ever acted in the face of a national representation... He was brought forward in full procession, to declare to the Convention that the religion which he had taught so many years was, in every respect, a piece of priestcraft, which had no foundation either in history or sacred truth. He disowned, in solemn and specific terms, the existence of the Deity to whose worship he had been consecrated, and devoted himself in the future to the homage of liberty, equality, virtue and morality. He then laid on the table his episcopal decorations, and received a fraternal embrace from the president of the Convention. Several apostate priests followed the example of this prelate.*

And here are the sentences deleted by Mrs White: 'It is said that the leaders of the scene had some difficulty in inducing the bishop to comply with the task assigned him, which, after all, he executed, not without present tears and subsequent remorse. But he did play the part described' (volume one, p. 172). Certainly our attitude toward the bishop is transformed by the knowledge that he performed the act under duress and wept as he did it; yet Mrs White, probably because she wished to underline the apostasy of the Catholic Church, did not reveal these crucial facts to us.' pp. 65, 66.

As we consider this second example, as described by Walter Scott (*The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte*, Philadelphia, 1859, Vol., I, pp. 172, 173), it is noteworthy that he writes: *'It is said that the leaders had some difficulty in inducing the bishop...'* That it was said, seems to indicate that it was not known as a solid fact. Things that are said, can be, even among faithful brethren, very dubious (Cf. John 21:23). However, a saying may well contain a more or less amount of truth, but usually it has not proven to be a good base to build a strong case upon. But let us accept that what was said was true. We notice then that the leaders only had *some* difficulty in inducing the bishop. This clearly conveys that it was for the leaders not a tough job, but a rather easy matter to get the bishop in line with their wishes. It also reveals that this bishop, named Gobet, or Gobel, was not a firm man of strong character, since he did not refuse resolutely. That he showed some unwillingness to comply with the task assigned him, is not unusual or special, but very natural and normal and therefore very much to be expected. It was, after all, not at all a light matter to him, since the role he was to play involved the shameful repudiation of his belief, position and life-work, which, in fact, would certainly have justified him in giving more determined resistance. But, anyway, he showed some unwillingness. Could we ever imagine that he would have reacted otherwise? Would it ever be thinkable that he would have readily played the part described, completely unmoved, without a tear or feeling of emotion? There is in fact no surprise in this bishop's attitude and therefore there is nothing strange nor anything exceptional in the statement of these details, except that we would probably appreciate this bishop better, if he had shown firm resistance. Ellen White, however, did not purpose to give us a personal description of this bishop's emotional attitude. The objective of her description is clearly more of another character and in that framework we can imagine very well that many feel that Ellen White was not obliged to put in also such details that are of a more personal and self-evident character. It, therefore, does not seem to make much sense when it is raised as a problem that she left out such particulars. The fact that this bishop did not firmly refuse, but, as we read, *'did play the part prescribed,'* counts and is determining; and that he did it emotionally is more a matter of obvious character, as something that goes without saying and that applies, to a great extent, also to the subsequent remorse. When one afterwards comes to think about one's way of acting, whatever that may be, then it often happens like that. There is not much new or special about that either. We could hardly imagine it otherwise. Is this then really such an important detail, as is asserted, and would the story even basically be altered if this is omitted? We would not think so. Did the bishop perform the act under duress? Scott does not mention that word. He only explains that according to what was said there was some difficulty in inducing the bishop to comply with the task assigned him - and he adds immediately - *'which after all, he executed...'* and Scott confirms once more: *'But he did play the part prescribed.'* Scott does not indicate in any way that the bishop defended his case with unflinching conviction nor that he was particularly threatened or forced; and as to the several apostate priests that followed the example of this prelate, we clearly find no trace of duress, force or pressure to make them act as they did. We must conclude then that with these two examples the argumentation in finding fault with Ellen White's description is weak, unduly and not convincing.

Now, if there are critics who still find fault with Ellen White's description of this prelate, they should not be partial. They should then also find fault with historians who describe this event in a similar way as Ellen White does or even more condemning. Note, for instance, the description of a well renowned historian like Thomas Carlyle. He describes that *"a certain Citoyen Parens, Curate of Boissise-le-Bertrand, writes to the Convention that he has all his life been preaching a lie, and is grown weary of doing it; wherefore he will now lay down his Curacy and stipend, and begs that an August Convention would give him something else to live upon... Hardly is this got decided, when goose Gobel, Constitutional*

Bishop of Paris, with his Chapter, with Municipal and Departmental escort in red nightcaps, makes his appearance, to do as Parens has done.

*Goose Gobel will now acknowledge 'no Religion but Liberty;' therefore he doffs his Priest-gear, and receives the Fraternal embrace." (Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, T. Y. Crowell, New York, no year, Vol. II, p. 320.)*

Consider also Gobel's attitude in contrast with that of Bishop Grégoire as described in another source: "*On Nov. 7, (1793) after the reading of a letter to the convention, beginning: 'I am a priest, that is, a charlatan,' Gobel, the archbishop of Paris, went to the president's desk and laid his letter of appointment to the post upon the table, saying amid great applause that the will of the people had been his first law, and that from this time on there could be no national worship except that of freedom and equality; he renounced his position as a servant of the Roman Catholic Church. He received congratulations from the president of the convention, and then laid aside his red cap, his cross, and his ring, and his vicars also deposited there the insignia of their offices. But this unworthy act brought Gobel no safety, since five months later he ascended the scaffold on the charge of aiding in the destruction of morals. In the scene just portrayed a Protestant minister took part – Julien, of Toulouse, declaring that Protestantism also had its charlatanry, and that henceforth he would have no other sanctuary than that of the law, no deity than freedom, no Gospel than the republican constitution. He died at the guillotine in Apr., 1794.*

*Bishop Grégoire was the only ecclesiastic of the convention to oppose this unworthy movement. His stand was bold and his declaration emphatic that his religion was a part of his most solemn convictions; his office was from the hands of the people, but his call to it came neither from the people nor the convention. He was violently assailed, but remained steadfast, continued to wear ecclesiastical dress, and presented so imposing a mien that no one ventured to lay hands upon him." (S. M. Jackson, *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Funk & Wagnalls, New York, London, 1909, Vol., IV, pp. 386, 387.)*

Although we may not agree with Catholic doctrine, we must admit that Bishop Grégoire's courageous attitude is far more admirable than that of Archbishop Gobel. No wonder that Edmond de Pressensé writes about this courageous Bishop: *But he wavered not in the hour of storm. Deep down in the hearts the episcopal costume of the Christian Deputy was much more respected than the revolutionary cap of the apostate Gobel. And he received the confidence of some of the ringleaders of the atheistical movement, who trembled in secret at the thought of the God whom they were insulting." (M. Edmond de Pressensé, *Religion and the Reign of Terror; or, The Church during the French Revolution*, Carlton & Lanahan, New York, 1868, p. 223.)*