

## Chapter 7

### Understanding Ellen G. White's Teaching on Temperance in the Light of the Nineteenth Century Context

Petronio M. Genebago, MPH, MAR

*Temperance has been a household term among the Seventh-day Adventists in the nineteenth century. This term carries with it a significant history and impact to the society. Our church, later on, adopted this term to one of its departments, which was Health and Temperance. Nevertheless, the term was dropped to pave the way to Health Ministries. Ellen G. White loves to discuss temperance. In fact, temperance was her favorite subject. This paper argues that the rich nineteenth-century temperance context helps to understand and appreciate the message and teaching of Ellen White on temperance. Moreover, the church needs to keep this legacy from this period alive and to pass on to our generation today. This paper will surely contribute to advance the health and wholeness of the people in Africa.*

*Keywords: temperance, Ellen White, alcoholism, drugs, tobacco, work, WCTU, nineteenth century*

## **I. Introduction**

Ellen G. White has written various printed works to guide the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Temperance was a major theme she wrote about throughout her journals, articles, manuscripts, and letters (White, 1949, p. 260). Temperance was her favorite theme: "On Sunday, June 23 [1873], I spoke in the Methodist church on Salem [Oregon], on the subject of Temperance. The attendance was usually good, and I had freedom in treating this, my favorite subject" (White, 1949, p. 260). However, in dealing with her "favorite subject," one needs to consider the context from which she has written about temperance. This is because White did not write about it in a vacuum (Knight, 1997, p. 78). What is the nineteenth century background of Temperance? How did Ellen White interact with this context? How did Ellen White's approach differ from the approaches of her day? What is her theology of temperance, in which she based her numerous teachings about the subject? How can the church today benefit from her treatment of temperance? These are some of the questions this paper addresses. The purpose of this study is to understand Ellen White teachings on temperance in the light of the nineteenth century context.

This study employs a descriptive and theological method of research. This study will proceed as follows: The first section provides the introduction. In dealing with this topic, the researcher in section 2 establishes the nineteenth century background of temperance. Section 3 surveys White's exposure and interaction on temperance during her time. The fourth section presents the teaching of White on temperance in general. Section 3 derives the implication and application of temperance in the church context today. The last section summarizes and concludes the study.

This study is significant for several reasons: (1) Understanding White's teaching on temperance in the context of the nineteenth century will help the church to see its responsibility to the community. (2) It will help the church to find helpful principles to guide its temperance program both inside and outside the church. (3) It will show the importance of studying the context of White in dealing with various topics she has written.

## **II. The Nineteenth Century Background of Temperance**

During the nineteenth century the Temperance literature was omnipresent (Young, 2016, p. 12). This demonstrates how important this

topic was during this period. It “has since become a rich topic for scholarly research” (Young, 2016, p. 12). In this section the problem of alcoholism in this century and the rise of temperance movements will be described. Nevertheless, terminologies will be defined beyond their meaning before proceeding to the above subtopics.

### **A. Clarifying Terminologies: Alcoholism, Intemperance, and Inebriety**

Before this section delves into the problem of alcoholism in the nineteenth century, there is a need to clarify terminologies such as “alcoholism,” “intemperance,” and “inebriety.” These terms meant more than their definitions in this century. The term “alcoholism” was only coined in 1849 as a term describing “a state of chronic alcohol intoxication that was characterized by severe physical pathology and disruption of social functioning” (Williams, 2011, p. 127). Magnus Huss, the Swedish physician, introduced this new term. Prior to this, the term being used was “intemperance.” This term, “intemperance,” was the prevailing word used to describe chronic drinking in 1840s through the Civil War (Williams, 2011, p. 122). Elizabeth H. Williams further explains,

‘Intemperate’ had religious affiliations, and was especially closely associated with evangelically motivated actions to fix chronic drunkenness and the social ills associated with it. Moral suasion, pledge-signing, and “gospel” temperance all used “intemperate” (as well as drunkard) as the primary terms for frequent chronic drinking, but from the Civil War to the turn of the century, the most commonly used terms changed several times from intemperate to inebriate to dipsomaniac to alcoholic. “Of the four terms, the oldest and most morally suffused was intemperance, a term that suggested a deviation from the golden rule of moderation championed by church and health evangelists alike—a term that physicians hoped to replace with inebriety” (Tracy 27). (Williams, 2011, pp. 122-123).

The development of the terms from “intemperance” to “alcoholism” was not without tension. During this period there was a tension between those in the religious side who sought spiritual solution to the problem on “intemperance” and those in the medical field who seek medical intervention on “alcoholism” (Williams, 2011, p. 123). Is the intemperance or alcoholism a moral problem or a disease? On the one

hand, “The notion that problems with alcohol were a question of morals and a cure was simply a matter of exerting the will had not changed much by 1870 (and in many respects have not extensively changed among many people today)” (Williams, 2011, p. 123). On the other hand, “The disease concept was still not a convincing argument to many doctors, and had gained very little public acceptance even as the religious implications of the word intemperance lost the force behind the language once found” (Williams, 2011, p. 124). Later on, in 1870s, the terms “inebriety” and “inebriate” were the popular terminologies being used, which describe the “chronic drunkenness that was not overly laden with the religious implications that ‘intemperance’ was.” (Williams, 2011, p. 124).

## **B. The Problem of Alcoholism in the Nineteenth Century**

Alcohol, before it became a serious problem, had served people in various ways. Even “prior to the nineteenth-century, alcohol consumption was an essential aspect of American culture, and ‘the role of drink in organizing life in the early republic was so pervasive that to condemn liquor was to denounce the very structure of early society.’” (Thompson-Gillis, 2007, p. 2). How did alcohol function in the life of Americans in this period? It served them in the following ways: (1) Americans took liquor as a safe alternative to unclean water and expensive coffee and tea, which was often imported from England; (2) they engaged in daily planned drinking breaks at 11:00am and 4:00pm, called “bitters,” (3) they consumed alcohol during weddings and funerals; (4) alcohol played a part in the election of government officials; (5) it also perpetuated a myth of American exceptionalism, which positioned America’s uniqueness and independence from all European influences; (6) farmers drank whiskey to keep warm during the long and frigid days of fieldwork; (7) drinking alcohol separated them from English culture; (8) Americans linked democracy and independence with the freedom to drink; and (9) Alcohol consumption was thought to promote good health for both men and women (Thompson-Gillis, 2007, pp. 2-3).

Due to this positive attitude toward drinking alcohol, statistics revealed that, “between 1800 and 1830, the average annual per capita consumption of distilled spirits in the U.S. was more than five gallons (187)” (Young, 2016, p. 6). This led a certain historian to describe the United States as an “alcoholic republic” (Douglas, 1998, pp. 46-47). During the eighteenth century the “common laborer could afford to get drunk every day,” which was “intensified in the early nineteenth century”

(Young, 2016, p. 6).

Some of the negative effects of drinking alcohol noted during this period were: (1) poor health, (2) drunkenness leading to industrial accidents, (3) drunkenness leading to abuse of family members, and (4) poverty through money spent on alcohol. Thus, it became clear that “alcohol consumption was damaging, and caused financial, physical, social and psychological problems” (Curtis, 2016, p. 60). In addition, Young reveals that, the problem of alcohol drinking resulted in the majority of “crimes and social ills in the United States” (Young, 2016, p. 8).

As early as 1772, Benjamin Rush, the physician from Philadelphia, decided to make “antiliquor crusade” his lifelong advocacy due to the negative health effects of alcohol. His crusade “had the most effect on the upper class, literate citizens” of his time. The next section will identify other Temperance Movements, which strongly advocated freedom from alcohol.

### **C. The Problem of Alcoholism in South Africa**

The problem of alcoholism in the 19th century is not far from that of South Africa. Janet Seggie in writing for *The South African Medical Journal* (SAMJ) describes the alcohol situation of the youth in South Africa. She writes,

South Africa (SA) is a hard drinking country. It is reckoned that we consume in excess of 5 billion litres of alcohol annually; this figure is likely to be higher still if sorghum beer is included, and equates to 9-10 litres of pure alcohol per person. According to a World Health Organization (WHO) report released in 2011, this is among the highest per capita consumption rates in the world, and it is continuing to rise. (Seggie, 2012, p. 578)

Presenting the statistics of the World Health Organization in 2011, she further discloses,

Alcoholism among youth is a particular concern, given that at least half of SA’s population is categorized as young people, under 35. Surveys have shown that alcohol use among our youth is common, and increases with age for both males and females. There is also a tendency to more harmful binge drinking. Reasons for use and misuse of alcohol include peer pressure and a desire to fit in, poor home environs and boredom, ignorance of alcohol’s harms, and the

relative cheapness of alcohol products and their ease of access. High youth unemployment rates must be an exacerbating factor. And in SA, alcohol is easily purchased from bottle stores, supermarkets, bars and sheens and other unlicensed liquor outlets, which outnumber licensed ones, particularly in disadvantaged communities. (Seggie, 2012, p. 578)

Kealeboga Mokolobate on October 27, 2017 adds,

According to global statistics, South Africans are among the highest consumers of alcohol. Many have noted the obvious effects such as increased mortality related to road accidents, especially over the festive season. According to reports released by the World Health Organization in 2012, approximately 6% of global deaths were attributed to alcohol consumption, and South Africa has been noted as the country worst affected by drunk driving in the world. Alcohol abuse in South Africa is also eroding our economy in countless direct and indirect ways and can be likened to the grim reaper, here to take the soul of the country in the dead of night, encouraged by each nonchalant alcoholic gulp. (Mokolobate, 2017, para. 1)

#### **D. Temperance Movements in the Nineteenth Century**

This section will deal with the rise of temperance movements due to the effects of alcohol during the nineteenth century. According to Sarah Elise Franzen Young, the first organization to address the issue of intemperance was organized in 1813. This organization, Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance (MSSI), “was driven by concern over the rise in poverty levels after the war of 1812” (Young, 2016, p. 7). MSSI tried “to curtail the whiskey-as-wages arrangements common in the hiring of day laborers,” “to eliminate ‘dram shops’ that sold drinks by the glass,” and “to pass laws ensuring that only citizens deemed morally upright were granted liquor licenses” (Young, 2016, p. 7). Ian Tyrell, however, commented that MSSI was poorly organized. Young indicates that in 1826, organized reforms took shape, “with the formation of the American Temperance Society (ATS).” (Young, 2016, p. 8). Young further narrates,

ATS officers were often New England clergyman. Lyman Beecher, the powerful Presbyterian minister and ATS co-founder, at this time delivered Six Sermons on the Nature, Occasions, Signs, Evils, and

Remedy of Intemperance, which would become “one of the major statements of the temperance movement” (Hirrell 120). Ministers like Beecher brought to the crusade an evangelistic fervor drawn from the contemporaneous Second Great Awakening. They also provided superior organizational capabilities. The ATS strategically allied itself with the American Tract Society, which annually distributed thousands of religious tracts and circulars, many focused on the merits of temperance. According to Tyrell, “paid full-time organizers, a network of voluntary organizations, systematic financing, and the printed word as the basis of temperance propaganda” underlay the ATS’s considerable success (67). By 1833, it boasted more than a million members, nineteen state societies, and 2000 local organizations (Tyrell 87). The ATS and other temperance advocates marketed abstinence as a path to self-improvement. Its religious supporters believed that intemperance caused an inability to “keep the animal instincts under control” and thus led to sin and “eternal damnation” (Tyrell 70). (Young, 2016, p. 8)

Unlike the MSSSI, which Tyrell describes as poorly organized, ATS had superior organization. As reported above, ATS has (1) paid full-time organizers, (2) a network of voluntary organizations, (3) systematic financing, and (4) printed word as the basis of temperance propaganda. As a result this movement grew to more than million members in 1833.

In 1840, Washingtonian Societies, consisted of working class reformed drunkards, “pioneered the ‘experience meeting’ during which purportedly ex-alcoholics told lurid tales of their trials with the bottle” (Young, 2016, p. 9). This “experience meeting” or “confessional meetings foreshadowed the present day group Alcoholics Anonymous,” which was founded in 1935 (Thompson-Gillis, 2007, pp. 4, 61).

The Woman Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), organized by women themselves, was established in 1874. The notable president of this union was Frances Willard. WCTU dominated the temperance movement in the nineteenth century. Through this union women asserted “themselves in the public sphere,” honed “their rhetorical skills,” and engaged “in conversations about controversial issues of domestic abuse, divorce, and women’s control over their own bodies” (Thompson-Gillis, 2007, p. 61). In 1892 WCTU grew to 150,000 paying members and to 355,355 in 1931. Although Alcohol prohibition was the main agenda of this movement, WCTU also addressed several social issues among which were: (1) education on the harmful effect of drugs among the youth, (2) sexual purity, (3) campaign against gambling, and (4)

campaign against pornography. The following were some of the accomplishments of WCTU: (1) they managed to shut down some 250 saloons in 50 days; (2) championed women's political right (Knight, 1997, 106-107); (3) became the most influential temperance organization in post bellum America (Williams, 2011, p. 110); (4) organized dissemination of an ideology about men, women and alcohol that shows up very clearly in the temperance plays, and was the foundation of all of their education campaigns; (5) championed the newly-conceived standards of family values, ideal femininity and masculinity, and promoted an incredibly influential framing of the roles and obligations of each member of the family; and (6) supported the passing of the Eighteenth Amendment.

Before we proceed to Anti-Saloon League (ASL), it is interesting to note the methodologies that WCTU employed in its temperance advocacy. First, they combined "gospel" temperance and political action. The former refers to "moral suasionist/religious conversion model of reform" (Williams, 2011, p. 110). It "was characterized by individual testimonials coupled with prayers of thanks as well as the frequency of the gatherings, and continued use of the pledge of abstinence as a device" (Williams, 2011, p. 110). Second, this movement "revived efforts to help drunkards reform voluntarily through confession and missionary work and endowed such reformations with explicitly religious and evangelical meanings: drinking and drunkenness were sins; repentance and God's grace could save the drunkard; giving public testimony could stir others to sign the pledge and experience conversion" (Williams, 2011, p. 68). To accomplish this, they "sought out drunkards in private homes, hospitals, jails, saloons, and even workplaces" (Williams, 2011, p. 68). Third, WCTU used printed materials and theatrical plays to promote temperance ideals. Fourth, advocates of this movement continued to treat intemperance as a moral issue or weakness of will power against the treatment of those in medical lines regarding intemperance as a disease. But for "Willard, habitual drunkenness remained a moral condition first, and a medical condition second" (Williams, 2011, p. 116). Fifth, WCTU was structured in part into small activist groups that used the power of theater to spread their messages on a regional level. Sixth, they took up axes and destroyed the liquor supply in local saloons. These vigilante attacks occurred between 1853 and 1859 in dozens of towns in Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Massachusetts, and other Northern states; immediately after the Civil War, several more raids occurred. Seventh, women also held marches and other public gatherings to rally support for the re-regulation of alcohol. Eighth, they brought about lawsuits against the owners of taverns/saloons. Ninth, advocates were present in a wide

range of social-improvement campaigns—child welfare, kindergartens, the Americanization of foreign-speaking peoples, health education, the suppression of impure literature, international peace, women's suffrage—and the WCTU delivered its anti-alcohol message in all of these arenas (Williams, 2011, p. 59).

The ASL, which was established in the early twentieth-century, was based in Westerville, Ohio. One of the strategies this league did was to produce temperance discourses in the form of tracts and pamphlets rather than literature. Later ASL became the primary source of temperance discourse. Unlike WCTU, which “had lost most of its power to the Anti-Saloon League,” ASL only “allowed men to hold office” (Thompson-Gillis, 2007, p. 31). However, women are not restricted to cast their votes. Both ASL and WCTU met their “primary goal on January 16, 1920, when Prohibition was enacted in America” (Thompson-Gillis, 2007, p. 31).

As a whole the temperance movement during this period did contribute to address the intemperance problem in their societies. The highlights of their success although they were later repealed were “the passing of the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1919, prohibiting the sale or manufacture of intoxicating liquors” (Knight, 1997, p. 106) and the passing of the Maine Law, “which both banned the sale of liquor in the state and allowed for its seizure and destruction by government officials” in 1851 (Young, 2016, p. 10).

### **III. The Exposure and Interaction of Ellen White on Temperance in Her Time**

In section 1, the nineteenth century context of temperance was discussed. In it we learned that the problem of intemperance, particularly drinking alcohol, brought health, social, economic issues to individuals, families, and communities locally and nationally. This led to the rise of temperance movements starting from 1813. In this section, we will survey the exposure and interaction of Ellen G. White on temperance during her time. To do this, we need to survey her birth and its connection to temperance, her counsel to work with temperance advocates and her endorsement of WCTU, and her temperance lectures to thousands of people.

#### **A. Birth and Place Temperance Connection**

Before Ellen White was born on November 26, 1827 near Gorham, Maine (Olson & Coon, 2013, p. 112), two temperance movements were

already organized to address the issue of intemperance, namely, the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance (MSSI) in 1831 and the American Temperance Society (ATS) in 1826 as mentioned above. As these temperance movements grew in membership, Ellen White grew in her age and exposure to temperance movements during this period. Charles Edward Dudley, Sr. recounts, "She was born in 1827 in the midst of social revolutions" (Dudley, 1999, p. 10) During this time "Temperance groups arose opposing the uses of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs" (Dudley, 1999, p. 10). George Knight, however, narrates,

But the major transformation of the temperance movement took place in the forties, when temperance proponents moved beyond moral persuasion to legislative reform. Ellen White's home state of Maine in 1851 would be the first state to legislate total abstinence. However, most of the "temperance laws was repealed or declared unconstitutional before the Civil War." (Knight, 1997, p. 41)

Ellen White did not only grow up in a world of social revolutions, which includes temperance, but she also was born in the place where the temperance movement was strong. She was born in Gorham close to Portland, Maine. In 1840 and during her first twenty years it was the largest city with the population of 15,218 (Douglas, 1998, p. 45). In this city there were temperance papers, which most likely Ellen White had received and read one or more. During the 1840s Portland Temperance community was already holding meetings and also had their temperance pledge cards, which they probably used to encourage listeners to sign after the meetings (Krug, 2008, p. 95). On his visit to Portland Maine, William Miller preached about temperance as well. Krug recounts,

Miller, like other evangelicals, was also engaged in temperance reform while promoting abolitionism and preaching the millennial message. At many Millerite meetings temperance pledge cards were passed out. In preparing people for second coming, Miller actively preached about temperance, and temperance activities followed his meetings in Portland, Maine in-1840. (Krug, 2008, p. 95)

In addition to Miller's preaching about temperance, during their gatherings "in those Millerite Adventist 'camp' meeting they sang temperance songs and handed out temperance pledge cards." Did White receive one and signed up a pledge card? Most likely she did. During William Miller's visit to Portland, Maine, the teenager Ellen, in 1840

(Douglas, 1998, p. 46), March 11-23(Olson & Coon, 2013, p. 112) to be exact, was privileged to hear the prophecies of the soon coming of Jesus Christ. What were the results of Miller's ten days revival in Portland, Maine. Krug reveals,

William Miller left Portland after ten days of preaching, but the revival spirit continued with a large number of baptisms following in many different churches in the surrounding communities. Eventually, characteristic of the period, the revival spread to reform. In his diary Caleb Bradley accounts recorded how liquor shops were closed and people held extended unified prayer meetings that included men and women praying together. Large numbers of baptisms across denominations were also documented similar to those Johnson identified in the Finney revival in Rochester. (Krug, 2008, p. 74-75)

Having this strong birth and place connections of Ellen White to temperance movements, one can agree with the statement of Adventist Historian Frederick Hoyt, "This then was the environment that nurtured the body, mind, and soul of young Ellen Gould Harmon" (Douglas, 1998, p. 48).

## **B. Working with Temperance Advocates**

Ellen White found no problem in working with temperance groups. She encouraged the Adventists during her time and in 1888 to work with temperance advocates. She writes, "In other churches there are Christians who are standing in defense of the principles of temperance. We should seek to come near to these workers and make a way for them to stand shoulder to shoulder with us. We should call upon great and good men to second our efforts to save that which is lost" (White, 1946, p. 217). She also encouraged the brethren to unite with them if given an opportunity. In fact, she made her husband an example when James invited a temperance worker to speak in his meetings. In return, when they were invited to attend their gatherings, they "always responded" (White, 1946, p. 217). However, White cautioned the church with the temperance groups who were disloyal to God. She warns, "We are not to take our stand with temperance clubs composed of all classes of men, with all kinds of selfish indulgences and call them reformers. There is higher standard for our people to rally under. We must as a people make a distinction between those who are loyal to the law of God, and those who are disloyal" (White, 1946, p. 217). She was also against temperance

groups that profess to be temperance advocates yet they were using tobacco, tea, and coffee. White also reminded the church that some Adventists would not agree to work with other temperance groups, to those who were not coming from the same faith. She emphasized that “in this they err by being too exclusive” (White, 1946, p. 218). On the one hand, she made herself clear that the church during her time could work with other temperance groups that were loyal to God. On the other hand, as they did so, they were not to sacrifice principle. Concerning this, she made a temperance lecture to the Martha Washington Home in Chicago although she noted that its members “do not believe with us in many points of doctrine” (White, 1946, p. 221). She challenged the church to be the head in the temperance reform. Two of the organizations she appreciated and prevised that they would succeed were the Battle Creek Reform Club and the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. In their meetings “God, Christ, Holy Spirit, and the Bible were familiar words” (White, 1946, p. 221). “Much good,” she continued, “had already been accomplished, and the activity of the workers, the system by which they labored, and the spirit of their meetings, promised greater good in time to come” (White, 1946, pp. 220-221). Ellen White also encouraged that the Adventist Temperance messages should be shared to other churches.

### **C. Endorsement of Woman’s Christian Temperance Union**

White had a high regard for the WCTU as reflected on her endorsement and appreciation of this temperance advocate. She noted that WCTU “is an organization with whose efforts for the spread of the temperance principles we can heartily unite” (White, 1946, p. 222). She even emphasized that the “light has been given me that we are not to stand aloof from them, but, while there is to be no sacrifice of principle on our part, as far as possible we are to unite with them when we can, and we can assuredly do this on the question of utterly closing the saloon” (White, 1946, p. 222). Again, in June 18, 1908 issue of Review and Herald, she reiterated, “I have been shown that we are not to shun the W.C.T.U. workers” (White, 1946, pp. 222-223). White made it clear that this effort to work with them should not affect the Adventist stand on the seventh-day, since they “cannot unite with them in a work of exalting a false Sabbath” (White, 1946, p. 224). The focus of joining was temperance work. By joining them in the temperance cause, we secure their help along temperance lines, and they, by uniting with us, will hear new truths which the Holy Spirit is waiting to impress upon hearts. During this time the leadership of the church was indifferent to what White was passionate about. But she saw the great advantage to be

gained by connecting with the W.C.T.U workers. Her reasons for joining and endorsing WCTU are two-fold and both are mission driven. First, by joining them, and even inviting them in Adventist camp meetings, the church could take advantage of the training that the members and leaders could get from them to advance the Adventist cause of temperance. Second, these workers would become acquainted with the teachings of the church. This, to White, would break the prejudice and misunderstanding that they had with the Adventists in the past. She also encouraged those who would be invited to their meeting to “never refuse” because she herself “never hesitated” to speak on temperance before them. She spoke with them in the United States, in Europe, and in Australia.

In here, one can see that Ellen White carefully chose the temperance movements that she was endorsing. To her evaluation, WCTU was a temperance movement that the church could unite with. However, by joining with them, she cautioned the church members not to sacrifice principles but rather show the truth that they espoused. Mission was paramount to White and therefore reason to promote and join the cause of temperance as indicated above.

#### **D. Temperance Lecture to Thousands of People**

As mentioned above, Ellen White did not only encourage the church to actively involve in temperance causes, to invite and be invited to selected temperance gatherings, but she herself attended and was invited to speak on temperance in the United States, Europe, and Australia. In this section, this paper will briefly discuss White’s lectures on temperance.

On November 8, 1886, Ellen White was invited to speak on temperance at Chistiana (Oslo), Norway. This was in response to the invitation of the local temperance society president. During that meeting, “she spoke to 1,600 people in the largest hall in the city, at the invitation of the president of the local temperance society. Before her were many prominent people including the bishop of the state church and a number of clergymen. Above her hung an American flag, which she highly appreciated (Douglas, 1998, p. 364). Unlike the usual dramatic stories and scary statistics, “she delivered her typical temperance address based on Biblical principles and illustrations. In a report of the meeting, she wrote: ‘When they saw that the subject was to be argued from a Bible standpoint, they were at first astonished, then interested, and finally deeply moved’” (Douglas, 1998, p. 364). After that lecture she received another invitation to speak at a local church but she declined it because of

her mission in Norway for Adventist churches' edification. Herbert E. Douglas further describes, "She traced the subject of temperance in Bible history, especially emphasizing how closely Christ was connected to the work of temperance throughout His life on earth" (Douglas, 1998, p. 365). Also, he enumerates her main points during her public talk below:

1. Our first parents sinned by "the indulgence of appetite."
2. Christ overcame the "indulgence of appetite" in the wilderness temptation, "showing that in His strength it is possible for us to overcome."
3. Nadab and Abihu, men of holy office, suffered fearful judgment because they permitted their minds to become "beclouded" and thus incapable of distinguishing right from wrong.
4. "Men of principle are needed" in legislative halls in courts of justice, as well as in schools and churches—"men of self control, of keen perceptions and sound judgment." Intemperance will render them incapable of "just decisions" and the ability "to rise above motives of self-interest or the influence of partiality or prejudice."
5. Parents must learn the lesson angels brought to Manoah, Samson's father, and to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. Children are affected 'for good or evil, by the habits of the mother' and their early household training.
6. Parents "transmit their own characteristics, mental and physical, their dispositions and appetites." "Children often lack physical strength and mental and moral power" because of parental intemperance (lack of self-control).
7. "From babyhood" children should be taught the principles and habits of "self-denial and self-control."
8. Daniel and his associates in the court of Babylon were used as forcible illustrations of true repentance. They were a "noble testimony" to the benefits of "strict temperance in the use of all His bounties, as well as total abstinence from every injurious and debasing indulgence."
9. "Not only is the use of unnatural stimulants needles and pernicious, but it is also extravagant and wasteful.... Thousands of parents.... spend their earnings in self-indulgence, robbing their children of food and clothing and the benefits of education." (Douglas, 1998, p. 365)

In the United States, White had the opportunity to address some 20,000 people on temperance in 1876 at the Groveland, Massachusetts. It

was again repeated in the camp meeting in 1877 (Knight, 1997, p. 109). Knight quotes Harverhill Daily Bulletin dated August 27 to picture what happened in that Sunday meeting,

The great occasion of the day was the afternoon service. The trains from all directions had brought immense crowds upon the ground, and the grove literally swarmed with people. Mrs. White spoke on the subject of Christian temperance. This lady is a forcible and impressive speaker, and holds the crowd with her clear utterances and convincing logic. (Knight, 1997, p. 109)

In here, we can see that Ellen White was passionate to reach out to the victims of intemperance and to the temperance workers. This is seen in her attendance and lectures on temperance to non-Adventist gatherings. Thus, by words and actions, White has championed the temperance cause of the Seventh-day Adventist.

#### **IV. The Teaching of Ellen White on Temperance**

In this section the teaching of Ellen White will be discussed. It will start from discussing her theology of temperance reflected on the Bible verses she quoted in promoting this cause. The following subtopics shall also be tackled: White's philosophy of temperance, comparison of her temperance coverage to the temperance of her day, strategies to help intemperate people, and others.

##### **A. White's Theology of Temperance**

Ellen White, besides the enumerated main points in her lecture on page 20, had used several Bible verses to support her temperance teaching. She wrote that people need to glorify God to benefit their fellowmen. In here she quoted 1 Corinthians 10:31, which says, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (White, 1946, p. 137). She challenged everyone to ask, "How can I invest my life so that it will yield the greatest profit? How can I do the most for the glory of God and the benefit of my fellow men?" Besides the glory of God as one reason to be temperate in eating, drinking, and in all that people do, she pointed out that the body is the temple of God. To support it she quoted 1 Cor 3:16-17, which says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God

destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” Since the body is the temple of God and of the Holy Spirit, she argued, “every nerve and muscle, every mental and physical endowment, is to be kept pure” (White, 1946, p. 137). One of the practices that defile the temple is drinking alcohol and smoking tobacco. She taught, “the liquor curse, with its world of woe, is defiling the temple of God.... By the use of liquor and tobacco men are debasing the life given them for high and holy purposes.” (White, 1946, p. 142). When people succumb to these practices, these people sell themselves “for a cup of poison.” Instead of God controlling them, “Satan takes control of his reason, his affection, his conscience.” These people are destroying the temple of God. Commenting on 1 Cor 9:24-25, with the emphasis on “everyone that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things, she wrote,

The apostle Paul here mentions the foot races, with which the Corinthians were familiar. The contestants in these races were subjected to the most severe discipline in order to fit them for the trial of their strength. Their diet was simple. Luxurious food and wine were prohibited. Their food was carefully selected. They studied to know what was best adapted to render them healthful and active, and to impart physical vigor and endurance, that they might put as heavy a tax as possible upon their strength. Every indulgence that would tend to weaken the physical powers was forbidden. (White, 1946, p. 144)

White argued that if these men were doing it for a wreath of perishable and the applause of men, “how much more should they who are running the Christian race in the hope of immortality and the approval of High Heaven be willing to deny themselves unhealthful stimulants and indulgences” (White, 1946, p. 144).

Ellen White considered Daniel and his friends as examples of “true temperance” in the court of Babylon. Daniel “purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank” (Daniel 1:8) (White, 1946, p. 153). The “approval of God was dearer to him than the favor of the most powerful earthly potentate, —dearer than life itself” (White, 1946, p. 142). Having pointed this out, White appealed,

The Hebrew captives were men of like passions with ourselves. Amid the seductive influences of the luxurious courts of Babylon, they stood firm. The youth of today are surrounded with allurements to self-indulgence. Especially in our large cities, every

form of sensual gratification is made easy and inviting. Those who, like Daniel, refuse to defile themselves will reap the reward of temperate habits. (White, 1946, p. 155-156)

She also used Colossians 2:21 and applied it to temperance. She stated, “touch not, taste not, handle not, tea, coffee, wines, tobacco, opium, and alcoholic drinks” (White, 1946, p. 163). There are still various texts that White used to teach temperance. However, we cannot discuss all of them here for time constraint. White connected the temperance cause “in the work of the third angels message. Especially does temperance reform demand our attention and support” (White, 1946, p. 234). Then she paused this question before God’s people,

Shall there not be among as a people a revival of the temperance work? Why are we not putting forth much more decided efforts to oppose the liquor traffic, which is ruining the souls of men, and is causing violence and crime of every description? With the great light that God has entrusted to us, we should be in the forefront of every true reform. (White, 1946, p. 234)

White plainly stated that the issue of temperance and intemperance could be seen in the light of the Great controversy between Jesus and Satan. She explained “There are but two powers that control the minds of men—the power of God and the power of Satan. Christ is man’s Creator and Redeemer; Satan is man’s enemy and destroyer. He who has given himself to God will build himself up for the glory of God, in body, soul, and spirit. He who has given himself to the control of Satan tears himself down” (White, 1946, p. 276).

## **B. White’s Temperance Philosophy**

Rachel Whitaker, enumerated the philosophy of White on temperance. This philosophy somehow sums up the cause, the solution, the coverage, and the responsibility of the church. Whitaker lists,

1. Disobeying the laws of health is as much a sin against God as transgression of His moral law;
2. Only conversion and the power of Christ can produce true temperance;
3. Temperance encompasses all areas of life, requiring healthful practices in diet, dress, and work, as well as abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, and stimulants;

4. Christians should work to prevent intemperance in their own homes and in society and should see to rescue those caught in harmful habits. (Whitaker, 2013, pp. 1211-1212)

### **C. Coverage of White's Temperance Cause**

Unlike most of the temperance movements in her time, which were focusing on alcohol, White's is comprehensive. It covers all the areas of life as indicated in number 3 philosophy above. To her, temperance and health are closely linked (Knight, 1997, p. 38). Thus, whatever affects the health could be considered as intemperance. "True temperance," White wrote, "teaches us to abstain entirely from that which is injurious, and to use judiciously only healthful and nutritious articles of food" (White, 1946, p. 3). Hers includes temperance in eating, drinking, sleeping, seeing, dressing, working, seeking riches, and others. Concerning eating, she commented, "The use of stimulating and indigestible food is often equally injurious to health, and in many cases sows the seeds of drunkenness" (White, 1946, p. 138). Their habits of diet, to her, had significant influence in their health, character, usefulness in this world, and in eternal destiny. Further, she elaborated,

Those who eat and work intemperately and irrationally, talk and act irrationally. It is not necessary to drink alcoholic liquors in order to be intemperate. The sin of intemperate eating—eating too frequently, too much, and of rich, unwholesome food—destroys the healthy action of the digestive organs affects the brain, and perverts the judgment, preventing rational, calm, healthy thinking and acting. (White, 1946, p. 138).

With regard to eating, drinking, sleeping, and seeing, she considered the indulgence in these areas as sin. In working or in laboring, she reminded that, "We should practice temperance in our labor. It is not our duty to place ourselves where we shall be overworked. Some may at times be place where this is necessary, but it should be the exception, not the rule. We are to practice temperance in all things" (White, 1946, p. 138). Moreover, she elucidated,

Those who make great exertions to accomplish just so much work in a given time, and continue to labor when their judgment tells them they should rest, are never gainers. They are living on borrowed capital. They are expending the vital force which they will need at a future time. And when the energy they have so

recklessly used is demanded, they fail for want of it. (White, 1946, p. 139)

In relation to this, she said that, "As a rule, the labor of the day should not be prolonged into the evening" (White, 1946, p. 139). She emphasized that instead of gaining they lose much in the process. She also has counsel for those who are intemperate in studying. Those who study much are like drunkards wandering "from safe paths, and stumble and fall in the darkness.... He is not to exhaust and waste his physical and mental powers in seeking to acquire all possible knowledge of the sciences, but is to preserve the freshness and vigor of all his powers to engage in the work which the Lord appointed him in helping souls to find the path of righteousness" (White, 1946, p. 140). She also has an advice for those who are avidly seeking riches. She said, "They narrow their lives to the single pursuit of money, sacrifice rest, sleep, and the comforts of life to this one object" (White, 1946, p. 140)

#### **D. Temperance Strategies of White**

In her book, *The Ministry of Health and Healing*, she outlines her strategy on how to help the intemperate. The list will show the physical, mental, social, and spiritual components of the strategies (White, 2004, pp. 91-95).

1. First attention should be given to their physical condition as Jesus did. "They need wholesome, unstimulating food and drink, clean clothing, opportunity to secure physical cleanliness."
2. Next is spiritual environment. "They need to be surrounded with an atmosphere of helpful, uplifting Christian influence."
3. Need of a place to break their chains that bind them. "In every city a place should be provided where slaves of evil habits may receive help to break the chains that bind them."
4. Mental preparation: "In dealing with victims of intemperance we must remember that we are not dealing with sane people but with those who for the time being are under the power of a demon." She encourage them to "Think not of the repulsive, forbidding appearance, but of the precious life that Christ died to redeem."
5. Be patient and forbearing.
6. Show that you are a friend.
7. Speak no word of censure.
8. Let no act or look express reproach or aversion.
9. Speak words that will encourage faith.

10. Seek to strengthen every good trait in his character.
11. Teach him how to reach upward.
12. Show him that it is possible for him to live in a way that will win the respect of others.
13. Help him to see the value of the talents that God has given but that he has neglected to improve.
14. Encourage him to lay hold of the hope set before him in the gospel.
15. Open the Bible before the tempted, struggling one, and again and again read to him the promises of God.
16. Patiently continue your efforts until with grateful joy the trembling hand gasps the hope of redemption through Christ.
17. Again and again they may fall. But do not, because of this, cease your efforts.
18. The victims of evil habits must be aroused to the necessity of making an effort for themselves.
19. The tempted one needs to understand the true force of the will. This is the governing power in human beings—the power of decision, of choice.
20. Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in the life. By yielding the will to Christ, we ally ourselves with divine power. We receive strength from above to hold us steadfast.
21. A pure and noble life, a life of victory over appetite and lust, is possible to all who will unite their weak, wavering human will to the omnipotent, unwavering will of God.
22. Those who are struggling against the power of appetite should be instructed in the principles of healthful living.
23. Those who are endeavoring to reform should be provided with employment. None who are able to work should be taught to expect food and clothing and shelter free of cost.
24. In our work for the fallen, the claims of the law of God and the need of loyalty to Him are to be impressed on mind and heart.

The above strategies show that Ellen White did not only have a biblical perspective on temperance but also had biblically inspired approaches or strategies on dealing with the intemperate. These also show that White seemed to consider the alcoholism problem as a moral issue than a medical one. She emphasized that the intemperate needs to exercise the power of the will by yielding to Christ to be sober. The temperance workers needed to work with the victims prayerfully, carefully, lovingly, and unselfishly.

## V. The Implication and Application of Temperance in the Church Today

What is the implication of this study for this generation today? In this paper one can see that Ellen White was born in a time when temperance movements had been actively at work. From her childhood to her adulthood she might have witnessed how these temperance groups worked hard to save the intemperate people in their society. As a Christian and an Adventist, she was sensitive to what was happening around her community. She did not hesitate to work with and reach out these temperance groups particularly the WCTU. She attended their meetings and spoke on temperance during their gatherings. She also encouraged the members and leaders of the Adventist church to join them without compromising the truths they were espousing such as the seventh-day Sabbath. She even recommended to invite them in the Adventist camp meetings to take advantage of training they could get from these people to advance the Adventist church's temperance causes. In return these temperance workers could also see the light that the church was preaching. White in her lifetime spoke in several temperance gatherings where thousands of people heard and appreciated her.

Due to White's wide external and internal exposure to the temperance movements in the nineteenth century, she was able to improve on what they had started. From focusing only on alcoholism, -which some includes drugs and tobacco;- White developed her own temperance approach. With the guidance from God and the light from the Word of God, hers was comprehensive which includes all the aspects of life.

As the Seventh-day Adventist church in this twenty first century, the members need to be sensitive to what the community needs and find ways to address them. Temperance work should not be disregarded. It is connected to the work of the third angel's message as she pointed out. White shares, "I feel distressed that they are holding very loosely the temperance question.... We should be at the head in the temperance reform" (White, 1946, p. 233). To her generation and to ours as well, she asks, "Shall there not be among us as a people a revival of the temperance work? Why are we not putting forth much more decided efforts to oppose the liquor traffic, which is ruining the souls of men, and is causing violence and crime of every description?" (White, 1946, p. 234). "With the great light that God has entrusted to us," she admonishes, "we should be in the forefront of every true reform" (White, 1946, p. 234).

## VI. Summary and Conclusion

This paper at the beginning asked the following questions: What is the nineteenth century background of Temperance? How did Ellen White interact with this context? How did Ellen White's approach differ from the approaches of her day? What is her theology of temperance, in which she based her numerous teachings about the subject? How can the church today benefit from her treatment of temperance? Each question will be briefly answered here. The nineteenth century background of temperance demonstrated the Christian's concern to address the needs of the community, particularly the problem of alcoholism among the individuals, family, and society locally and nationally. Although the problem of alcoholism sparked the temperance movements, some, later on included the fight against drugs, tobacco, gambling, and pornography. The work of temperance during this period was interdenominational. They worked together, although they differed in certain doctrines, for the cause of temperance.

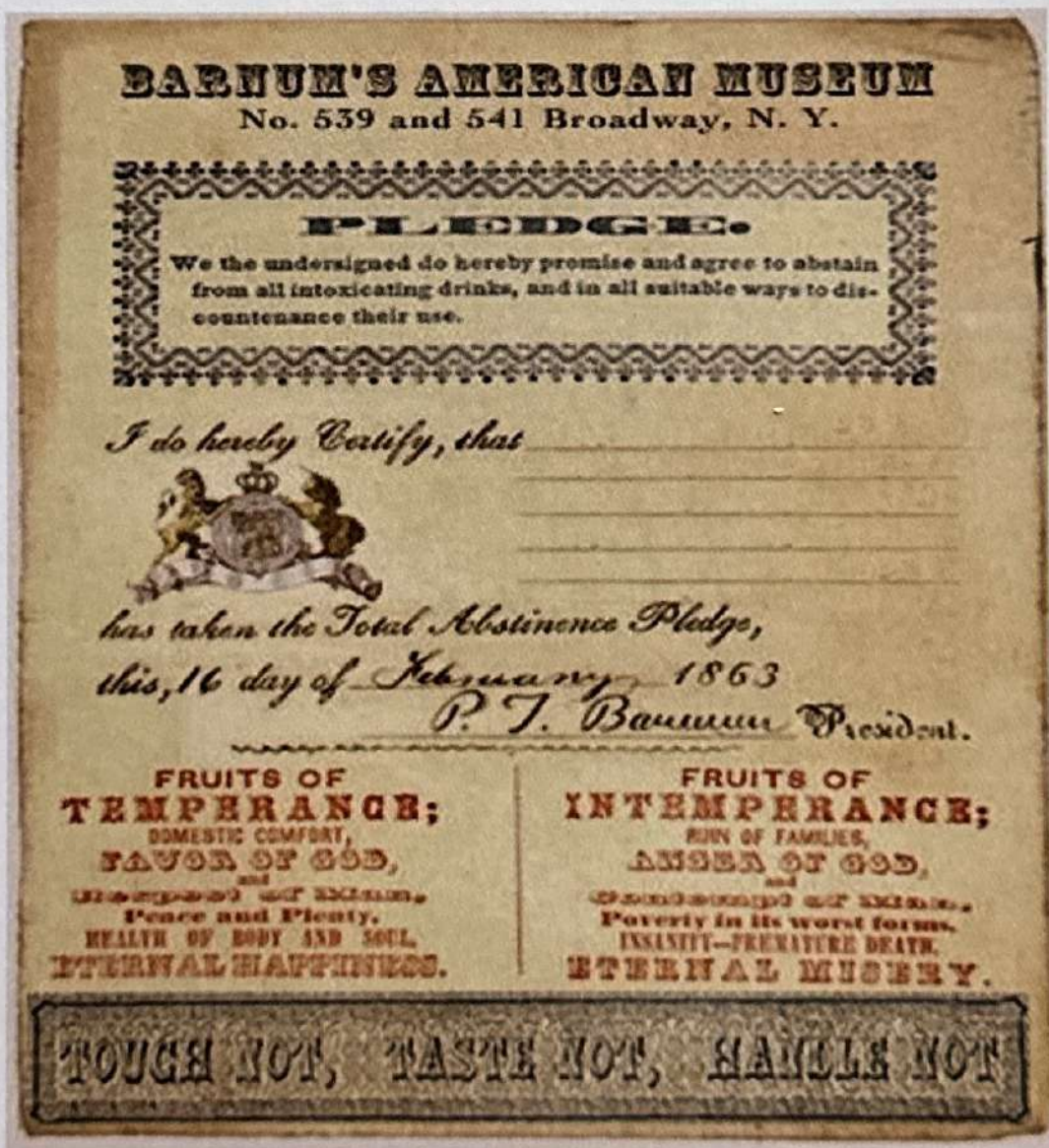
Ellen White was exposed to the work of temperance from her childhood since she was born during this social revolution. Long before her birth, temperance movements were actively working. Close to her hometown, in Portland, Maine, the work of temperance blossomed. Temperance lectures were actively done and literature was distributed profusely. Even William Miller did his share in championing the temperance cause during his ten-day visit to Maine. As an Adventist, White did not hesitate to join the temperance advocates, particularly WCTU. She appreciated them and participated in their meetings as an audience and as a lecturer. She also encouraged both the members and leaders to invite temperance workers in camp meetings to take advantage of the training they could get and also to give them an opportunity to know the truths the Adventists were upholding. She, however, reminded them to do it carefully and not to sacrifice principles by joining with them.

Ellen White differs from the temperance movements of her day in various ways. First, while others provided statistics and theater plays to promote temperance, White traced the problem of alcoholism from the Bible. Her arguments came from the plain Word of God. Second, while others limited their temperance on alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, her coverage was holistic. She included intemperance in eating, drinking, dressing, working, studying, and a lot more which covers the whole aspect of man. Theologically, she taught that being temperate in all things brings glory to God. Since the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, the body should be protected from unhealthful habits. She also taught that

temperance cause is embedded in the third angel's message. The issue of temperance, for her, could be seen in the context of great controversy between Jesus and Satan.

The way she approached temperance during her time, is still relevant for his church in this century. As living in the last days, this work should continue. The members should be educated on the temperance cause, which, the word itself has been removed from the health ministries department. Previously it was called health and temperance. There should be a revival of temperance work in our churches today both inside and outside of the church.

### Appendix



Barnum's Teetotal Pledge (Rosenschweig Web)

## References

- Bordin, Ruth. (1981). *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP.
- Burns, Eric. (2004). *The Spirits of America: A Social History of Alcohol*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Curtis, Jonathan Paul. (2016). "Methodism and Abstinence: A History of the Methodist Church and Teetotalism." PhD thesis, University of Exeter.
- Douglas, Herbert E. (1998). *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White*. Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press.
- Dudley, Sr., Charles Edward. (1999). *The Genealogy of Ellen Gould Harmon White: The Prophetess of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Story of the Growth and Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination as it Relates to African-Americans*. Nashville, TN: Dudley Publishing Services.
- Knight, George R. (1997). *Reading Ellen White: How to Understand and Apply Her Writings*. Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald.
- Knight, George R. (1998). *Ellen White's World: A Fascinating Look at the Times in Which She Lived*. Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald.
- Krug, Howard P. (2008). "Charles Finney and Willam Miller: Revivalists, Reformers, and Millennialists Looking Downward and Upward." MA Thesis, University of New York, Brockport.
- Mattingly, Carol. (1998). *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP.
- Mokolobate, Kealeboga. (2017). "Effects of Alcohol Consumption in South Africa: From the Cradle to the Grave," Mail & Guardian, October 27, 2017. Retrieved from <https://mg.co.za/article/2017-10-27-00-effects-of-alcohol-consumption-in-south-africa-from-the-cradle-to-the-grave>
- Murdock, Catherine G. (1998). *Domesticating Drink: Women, Men, and Alcohol in America, 1870-1940*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP.
- Olson, Robert W. and Roger W. Coon. (2013). "Ellen G. White: A

Chronology.” *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. Edited by Denis Fortin, Jerry Moon, Michael W. Campbell, and George Knight. Hagerstown, Maryland: Review & Herald.

Parsons, Elaine Frantz. (2003). *Manhood Lost: Fallen Drunkards and Redeeming Women in the Nineteenth-Century United States*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Seggie, Janet. (2012). “Alcohol and South Africa’s Youth.” *The South African Medical Journal*, 102(7), p. 578.

Thompson-Gillis, Heather Joy. (2007). “Maddened by Wine and By Passion”: The Construction of Gender and Race in Nineteenth-Century American Temperance Literature. MA Thesis, Miami University.

Whitaker, Rachel. (2013). “Temperance.” *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. Edited by Denis Fortin, Jerry Moon, Michael W. Campbell, and George Knight Hagerstown, Maryland: Review & Herald.

White, Ellen G (1949). *Temperance As Set Forth in the Writings of Ellen G White*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press.

White, Ellen G (2004). *The Ministry of Health and Healing: An Adaptation of Ellen White Classic Work The Ministry of Healing in Today’s Language*. Ontario, Canada: Review & Herald.

Williams, Elizabeth H. (2011). "A Typical Drunkard: 5e Establishment of the Alcoholic Stereotype on the American Stage." PhD Dissertation, University of Colorado.

Young, Sarah Elise Franzen. (2016). “Alcoholic Republic/Temperate Empire: Temperance and Imperialism in U.S Literature, 1830-1870.” PhD diss., Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

#### About the Author:

Petronio M. Genebago is a PhD student in Old Testament at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in Silang, Cavite, Philippines. He earned his MAR in Biblical Languages at the same institution on March 6, 2016. He is also an instructor at the Adventist University of the Philippines. He has served in pastoral ministry as a frontline pastor and as a departmental director of the North Philippine

Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the  
Philippines.