

Considering the ‘Sins on the Ground’: John 7:53-8:11 and Ellen G. White’s *Desire of Ages*

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Abstract

The *Desire of Ages* was published by Ellen G. White in 1898 on the Life of Christ. A number of similar books appeared by scholars like Hanna, Farrar, Edersheim, and Conybeare. Accused of plagiarism, and defended by other scholars, a phrase is chosen in this research from *Desire of Ages* where it is said Jesus wrote on the ground: “There traced before them, were the guilty secrets of their own lives,” in the context of *pericope adulterae* of John 7:53-8:11. The phrase is not in the KJV but in some ancient manuscripts with a similar expression. The similar words were first-time used in 1893 by F. Farrar in a footnote and then dismissed, as well as in 1895 by F. C. Conybeare in an article. Ellen White at that time was in Australia at her home Sunnyside. The word “traced” was commonly used by Ellen White. So, it is definitely her writing and not one of the assistants in the USA. After comparing with other writers, it was suggested that her writing of the phrase was not plagiarized from any of these works and yet it contained content that could be found in early Greek manuscripts. It is amazing that the one who did not have the Greek knowledge could write the same content which was found in Greek manuscripts such as U, 700, al, and 264. This aspect provides some strong support for individuals to say that the *Desire of Ages* is inspired.

Keywords: John 7:53-8:11, *Pericope Adulterae*, *Desire of Ages*, Plagiarism, Conybeare

1. Introduction

After bringing the scrap-books of Ellen White on the *Life of Christ* together, the *Desire of Ages* was born in 1898. She had an assistant in Davis helping her but there were strict limitations. The assistant could not add or *ad hoc* modify by herself, unless it was supported with the handwriting of Ellen White.² For the final edition, Ellen White was in Australia. This is the broader picture leading to this investigation of her dealing with the *pericope adulterae* as it is known by scholars, in John 7:53-8:11. Ellen White made a sentence in *Desire of Ages* that is not in the King James Version: “There traced before them, *were the guilty secrets of their own lives*” (italics supplied for emphasis).³

The purpose of this investigation is to see where Ellen White could have gotten an idea in sources before her, with the nearest in time candidate, the article by F. C. Conybeare in 1895, for this phrase. Are these words mentioned in the sources that were available for her writing this book? If not, are there New Testament manuscripts that read these words? If so, are her words a direct citation from them? Were they in English and available to Ellen White and how? What are the dates involved of the publication of a candidate author for comparison in English and comparing the dates of the composition of *Desire of Ages*? If the idea existed before Ellen White, what was the form of the syntax of this phrase back then and how does it compared to that of Ellen White? The phrase came from the hand of Ellen White for a fingerprint word “trace” is used by her here.

This investigation may lead to a better understanding and appreciation of Inspiration, which is of course always a subjective decision even though objective data are presented. Some Adventist scholars have accused her of plagiarism but others have taken the same material and compared it, and came to opposite conclusions. All these

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² Jerry Moon, “The Desire of Ages,” Ellen G. White Estate: Sharing the Vision. Downloaded from the internet on the 23rd of January 2022 at <https://ellenwhite.org/people/18221>. See also: “The Desire of Ages Sources, Study of.” Further reading: EGW Biography, 4:375-393; E. M. Anderson, “Learning From the Desire of Ages Project” (1999, DF 51-B-1, CAR); R. W. Coon, “Ellen White’s Use of Literary Assistants: The Prophet as Writer” (lecture outline, Apr. 13, 1995, pp. 8, 9, CAR); R. W. Olson and R. Graybill, “How The Desire of Ages Was Written” (Ellen G. White Estate: EGWE, 1979, SDoc); W. C. White, “How Ellen White’s Books Were Written” (EGWE, 1935, SDoc).

³ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 461.

loose ends tossed out by cynicism are critically evaluated and putting Ellen White to test on the lab table of scholars' scrutiny.⁴ Finally, the readers remain the ultimate judge.

2. The Greek Text and Transliteration of John 8:8

Here is the text as it reads in the Greek New Testament from the 4th edition by UBS.⁵

8 καὶ πάλιν κατακύψας ἔγραψεν εἰς τὴν γῆν.

8 kai palin katakupsa egraphen eis tēn gēn

Notice that nothing is said what [the content is that] He wrote.

3. Modern Painters of *Pericope Adulterae*

It is remarkable how artists were drawn in by this *pericope* in the Gospel of John.



Christ with the Woman Taken in Adultery, by Guercino, 1621 (Dulwich Picture Gallery).



Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery, 1565 by Pieter Bruegel, Oil on panel, 24cm x 34cm.



Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery, drawing by Rembrandt (died 1669).
Some consider Rembrandt as the greatest story-teller in art.

⁴ As mentioned later when I will be dealing with S. Andrews in 1900, that he listed extensively Victorian publications on the *Life of Christ* so the work of S. Ayers is also important: Samuel Gardiner Ayers, *Jesus Christ our Lord: An English Bibliography of Christology Comprising over Five Thousand Titles annotated and classified* (New York: A.C. Armstrong & Son, 1906). Downloaded on the 23rd of January 2022 from https://archive.org/stream/jesuschristourl01ayregoog/jesuschristourl01_ayregoog_djvu.txt

⁵ Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Society, 1994).

4. Ellen White and other Manuscripts

In comparing John 7:53-8:11 between Ellen White 1898 in *Desire of Ages* and Frederick Farrar (1874): 71 footnote 1 and 62 and Alfred Edersheim in 1883 Vol. II Bk iv chapter 7 there is a phrase that is not found in any of them (I will discuss them in detail below):

4.1 Guilty Secrets of Their Own Lives on the Ground Concept

In *Desire of Ages* Ellen White says:

“There traced before them, were the guilty secrets of their own lives.”

Some later post-biblical texts had similar readings.

4.2 Own Transgressions on the Ground Concept

In the *Gospel of Barnabas* (Chapter 201) it is said: "Then Jesus bowed down and made a mirror with his finger on the ground, in which each saw his own transgressions."⁶

4.3 Names on the Ground Concept

In church Father Jerome's work *Writings against the Pelagians* 2.17, Jerome quotes the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and has translated it as follows: "None of the accusers of the woman caught in adultery were without sin. Christ wrote their names on the earth."

4.4 Sins on the Stones Concept

Armenian Bible Manuscript Codex Edschmiadzin (892 A.D) has the next reading.

“But he himself, bowing his head, wrote with his finger on the earth to proclaim their sins. And they saw their many sins on the stones. But they, filled with shame, went away, and no one remained but the woman alone. Said Jesus, 'Go in peace and make the sacrifice for sins as it is written in their law.'”

4.5 Hebrew Characters in the Earth, Which Is the Ten Commandments Concept

Nicholas Poussin⁷ thinks Christ points to several Hebrew characters written in the earth, letters which are likely intended to represent the Decalogue.⁸

4.6 ‘To Declare Their Sins; and They Were Seeing Their Several Sins on the Stones’

Frederick Conybeare suggested this reading in 1895.⁹ It will be discussed more fully later.

5. Greek Texts of the Addition

So far, I have listed some examples of people suggesting an extra that is not in the Greek text of the Gospel of John, namely, the content of what was written on the ground. These are scholars after the biblical period, after John completed Revelation in 97/8 AD. Are there any manuscripts in Greek or other biblical languages that supports this addition or extra information and are they similar to that of Ellen White in *Desire of Ages*?

⁶ For a very good blog on the *Gospel of Barnabas* as text-critically very late, namely, between the 14th to 16th centuries, see online downloaded https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Barnabas.

⁷ Nicholas Poussin's *Cristo e l—adultera* (1653; Paris. Louvre, ill. 44).

⁸ Saracino, Francesco, “Quei misteriosi caratteri—. Poussin, l—Adultera e il decalogo,” *Gregorianum* 88 (2007), 5–22.

⁹ Frederick C. Conybeare, “On the Last Twelve Verses of St. Mark's Gospel,” *Expositor* 5.2 (1895): 406; reprinted by David C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 99; and Vrej Nersessian, *The Bible in the Armenian Tradition* (London: The British Library, 2001), 20.

5.1 Each and Every One of Their Sins

A host of scholars even today are disputing the pericope but I will not enter into the pros and cons regarding this matter here. It is biblical and will be treated as such.¹⁰

John 8:6 and 8:8 has this addition not in the main text presented but in the lower register where manuscripts are listed, which reads in Greek as follows¹¹ and transliterated and translated also:

ένος έκαστου αυτων τας άμαρτιας

henos hekastou autōn tas hamartias

“each and every one of their sins”

(The Greek manuscripts that supported this extra reading are: Codex U, minuscule 73, minuscule 95, minuscule 331, minuscule 413, minuscule 700)

6. Scholars for John 7:53-8:11 to Be in the Bible and against It

6.1 Sixteenth Century Scholars Doubting

Scholars in the 16th century saw that the manuscripts lack it. Others saw the manuscripts had critical signs (lemniscus or asterisk) in it. They decided then that it may have been omitted due to a lectionary function for festivals of the Greek church.¹²

6.2 Scholars that Argue against It

The following scholars were against the inclusion of this pericope in the Gospel of John: Lachmann (Germany 1840); S. Davidson (1848-1851); Tregelles (1862); Hort (1886); Cadbury (1917); Colwell (1935); Metzger (1971).¹³

¹⁰ Jennifer Wright Knust's idea that the *Pericope Adulterae* was not fixed but a fluid piece of work that landed in Christian hands to be utilized as an anti-Jew smear campaign in Middle-Age history, is not shared by this writer. "The *pericope adulterae*, increasingly invoked to produce Christian hegemony at the expense of 'the Jews,' real or imagined, became a story about Jewish sin and Christian difference. This interpretation then influences the transmission of the tale, though traces of earlier readings lingered." J. W. Knust, "Early Christian Re-Writing and the History of the *Pericope Adulterae*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14/4 (January 2006): 485-536. Downloaded on the 15th of July 2021 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236755669_Early_Christian_ReWriting_and_the_History_of_the_Pericope_Adulterae. The (3) citations from churchfather Ambrose of Milan discussed and cited by scholars, rather display a derivative influence from John 8 on Ambrose than the other way around, namely their theory that Ambrose put it in John 8 for the first time in history. I am not the only one skeptical of these links between John 8 and the three citations in Ambrose. He wrote in his Epistle 68.14: "Scribebat autem in terra digito quo legem scripserat ... Secundo autem scripsit, ut gemino testamento Iudaeos scias esse damnatos" (trans. Mary Melchior Beyenka; CSEL 82:175; FC 26:472) translated as "And he wrote on the earth with the finger with which he had written the law... And he wrote the second time, so that you may know that the Jews are condemned by the double testament". The second citation from Ambrose is his Epistle 50.4: "Quid scribebat nisi illud propheticum: Terra terra scribe hos viros abdicatos, quod de Iechonia lectum est in Hieremia propheta?" (trans. Beyenka; CSEL 82:57-58; FC 26:493 which can be translated as "What did he write but the prophetic word: Earth earth write these men abdicated, which was read about Jeconiah in the prophet Jeremiah?" The third citation is from the Epistle of Ambrose a little further on in Epistle 50.5, 7: "Cum Iudaei interpellant, in terra scribuntur nomina Iudaeorum, cum adeunt Christiani, non scribuntur in terra fidelium nomina, sed in caelo. In terra autem scribuntur abdicati a patre proprio, qui patrem temptant et contumeliosius irrogant auctori salutis" (trans. Beyenka; CSEL 82:58; FC 26:493) translated as "When the Jews interrupt, the names of the Jews are written on the ground; when the Christians come, the names of the faithful are not written on the ground, but in heaven. Those who tempt their father and reproach the Author of salvation will be written in the land". Compare Jeremiah 17:13: "they that depart from You shall be written in the earth," These references are vague and distant echoes of the pericope of the Gospel of John in chapter 8. The conclusion about slowness of Church-Fathers to accept the pericope in the Bible, does not mean one should invite skepticism in regarding its inclusion. Those were difficult times with nearly ten persecutions of Christians before Constantine, bookburning, book-theft for libraries, and Constantine insisting he wanted 50 copies of the Bible copied "in a hurry."

¹¹ Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, eds., *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993).

¹² "Jesus and the Woman Taken in Adultery," Wikipedia. Accessed on February 3, 2022 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_and_the_woman_taken_in_adultery.

¹³ S. P. Tregelles, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scripture* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1856), 465-468; Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche

There is a theory that John himself added it in a second edition by himself.¹⁴

6.3 Defenders of Its Authenticity

The following scholars accepted the pericope as part of the Gospel: Nolan (1865); Burgon (1886); Hoskier (1920); D. O. Fuller (1975); W. Pickering (1980/2014); Hodges & Farstad (1982/1985); Robinson & Pierpont (2005).¹⁵

7. Theories Why It Was Lost in the Gospel of John

a. This part was lost due to the lectionary function of the church:

A lectionary is a portion of scripture allocated to be read in the divine service. Churches would allocate lectionaries for the service so who would like to read about accusing adulterous women when, well, it was a practice to do so? Some said the passage was moved because of these lectionary functions. An early lectionary indicates some marks where the passage should have been, but the passage itself was absent. Thus, it was suggested that a copyist did not know what the marks mean and dropped the *pericope* John 7:53-8:11 due to misunderstanding.

b. Some theorized that it was transplanted later in the book of John for practical liturgical purposes.

c. The pericope is left out from Papyrus 66 and Papyrus 75 and Codex N simply because these manuscripts are not complete and one cannot judge that it was left out.

d. Some manuscripts which left it out, mentioned that it was earlier there (Codex Lambda and other minuscles).

e. Minuscule 565 said that it was originally after John 7:52, but moved later.

f. Some marks are not on the pericope but on the passage for lection after the pericope.

g. Taking it away from chapter 7 at the end makes the narrative end abruptly and strange to start a narrative “And everyone went to his house...”

8. Manuscript Evidence

The following will read like a telephone book, but there is no other way to do justice to the data and reality of many manuscripts indicating that the pericope was not in their version of the Gospel of John. The researcher of Wikipedia did an enormous work of collecting the examples.

8.1 Pericope Excluded

Papyri 66 (c. 200) and 75 (early 3rd century); Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus (4th century), also apparently Alexandrinus and Ephraemi (5th), Codices Washingtonianus and Borgianus also from the 5th century, Regius from the 8th (but with a blank space expressing the copyist's awareness of the passage), Athous Lavrensis (c. 800), Petropolitanus Purpureus, Macedoniensis, Sangallensis (with a distinct blank space) and Koridethi from the 9th century and Monacensis from the 10th; Uncials 0141 and 0211; Minuscules 3, 12, 15, 21, 22, 32, 33, 36, 39, 44, 49, 63, 72, 87, 96, 97, 106, 108, 124, 131, 134, 139, 151, 157, 169, 209, 213, 228, 297, 388, 391, 401, 416, 445, 488, 496, 499, 501, 523, 537, 542, 554, 565, 578, 584, 703, 719, 723, 730, 731, 736, 741, 742, 768, 770, 772, 773, 776, 777, 780, 799, 800, 817, 827, 828, 843, 896, 989, 1077, 1080, 1100, 1178, 1230, 1241, 1242, 1253, 1333, 2106, 2193, 2768 and 2907; the majority of lectionaries; some Old Latin, the majority of the Syriac, the Sahidic dialect of the Coptic, the Garima Gospels and other Ethiopic witnesses, the Gothic, some Armenian, Georgian mss. of Adysh (9th century); Diatessaron (2nd century); apparently Clement of Alexandria (died 215), other Church Fathers namely Tertullian (died 220), Origen (died 254), Cyprian (died 258), John Chrysostom (died 407), Nonnus (died 431), Cyril of Alexandria (died 444) and Cosmas (died 550).

8.2 Shorter Pericope Excluded

Bibelgesellschaft, 2001), 187–189. See also “Jesus and the woman taken in adultery,” Wikipedia. Accessed on February 3, 2022 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_and_the_woman_taken_in_adultery.

¹⁴ F. H. A. Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1883).

¹⁵ “Jesus and the woman taken in adultery,” Wikipedia. Accessed on February 3, 2022 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_and_the_woman_taken_in_adultery.

A few verses from the pericope are included and the rest dropped out: only Minuscule 759 contains John 7:53–8:2 but excludes 8:3–11.

8.3 Shorter Pericope Included

There are manuscripts that only include the shorter pericope.

(8:3–11). **ℓ** 4, **ℓ** 67, **ℓ** 69, **ℓ** 70, **ℓ** 71, **ℓ** 75, **ℓ** 81, **ℓ** 89, **ℓ** 90, **ℓ** 98, **ℓ** 101, **ℓ** 107, **ℓ** 125, **ℓ** 126, **ℓ** 139, **ℓ** 146, **ℓ** 185, **ℓ** 211, **ℓ** 217, **ℓ** 229, **ℓ** 267, **ℓ** 280, **ℓ** 282, **ℓ** 287, **ℓ** 376, **ℓ** 381, **ℓ** 386, **ℓ** 390, **ℓ** 396, **ℓ** 398, **ℓ** 402, **ℓ** 405, **ℓ** 409, **ℓ** 417, **ℓ** 422, **ℓ** 430, **ℓ** 431, **ℓ** 435(8:2–11), **ℓ** 462, **ℓ** 464, **ℓ** 465, **ℓ** 520 (8:2–11).

8.4 Pericope Included

The following list included the pericope of John 7:53-8:11: Codex Bezae (5th century), Codex Basilensis A. N. III. 12 (8th century), 9th century Codices Boreelianus, Seidelianus I, Seidelianus II, Cyprius, Campianus, Nanianus, also Tischendorfianus IV from the 10th, Codex Petropolitanus; Minuscule 28, 318, 700, 892, 1009, 1010, 1071, 1079, 1195, 1216, 1344, 1365, 1546, 1646, 2148, 2174; the Byzantine majority text; **ℓ** 79, **ℓ** 100 (John 8:1–11), **ℓ** 118, **ℓ** 130 (8:1–11), **ℓ** 221, **ℓ** 274, **ℓ** 281, **ℓ** 411, **ℓ** 421, **ℓ** 429 (8:1–11), **ℓ** 442 (8:1–11), **ℓ** 445 (8:1–11), **ℓ** 459; the majority of the Old Latin, the Vulgate (Codex Fuldensis), some Syriac, the Bohairic dialect of the Coptic, some Armenian, Didascalia (3rd century), Didymus the Blind (4th century), Ambrosiaster (4th century), Ambrose (died 397), Jerome (died 420), Augustine (died 430).

8.5 Questioning the Presence of the Pericope

There are marks in the manuscripts that indicate uncertainty what to do with John 7:53-8:11. The scribes marked John 7:53-8:11 with asterisks (*) or obeli (÷). Codex Vaticanus 354 (S) and the Minuscules 4, 8, 14, 18, 24, 35, 83, 95(questionable scholion), 109, 125, 141, 148, 156, 161, 164, 165, 166, 167, 178, 179, 200, 202, 285, 338, 348, 363, 367, 376, 386, 407, 443, 478, 479, 510, 532, 547, 553, 645, 655, 656, 661, 662, 685, 757, 758, 763, 769, 781, 797, 801, 824, 825, 829, 844, 845, 867, 873, 897, 922, 1073, 1092 (later hand), 1187, 1189, 1443 and 1445 include entire pericope from 7:53; the menologion of Lectionary 185 includes 8:1ff; Codex Basilensis (E) includes 8:2ff; Codex Tischendorfianus III (Λ) and Petropolitanus (Π) also the menologia of Lectionaries **ℓ** 86, **ℓ** 211, **ℓ** 1579 and **ℓ** 1761 include 8:3ff.

Minuscule 807 is a manuscript with a *atena*, but only in John 7:53–8:11 without *catena*. It is a characteristic of late Byzantine manuscripts to conform to the sub-type Family K^ξ, and the *pericope* is marked then with obeli. Maurice Robinson argued that these marks are intended to remind lectors or readers that these verses from John 8:1-11 are to be omitted from the Gospel lection or reading for Pentecost, not to question the authenticity of the passage.

8.6 Shorter Pericope Questioned

The shorter pericope is (8:3–11) included. Some manuscripts marked it with asterisks (*) or obeli (÷), like 707.

8.7 Relocate Pericope

There are other manuscripts that moved the *pericope* elsewhere in the Gospel or Gospels. Family 1, minuscules 20, 37, 135, 207, 301, 347, and nearly all Armenian translations place the *pericope* after John 21:25; Family 13 place it after Luke 24:53; a corrector to Minuscule 1333 added 8:3–11 after Luke 24:53; and Minuscule 225 includes the pericope after John 7:36. Minuscule 129, 135, 259, 470, 564, 831, 1076, 1078, and 1356 place John 8:3–11 after John 21:25. 788 and Minuscule 826 placed the pericope after Luke 21:38

8.9 Added by a Later Hand

In some manuscripts there is evidence that a later second scribe added the pericope of John 7:53-8:11: Codex Ebnerianus, 284, 431, 461, 470, 578, 2174.

9. Early Scholars That Cited the Pericope

There are eleven fourth- and fifth-century Latin authors, who cited from John 7:53-8:11: Pseudo-Ambrose (Ambrosiaster), Ambrose, Augustine, Cassiodorus, Gelasius, Leo the Great, Hilary of Poitiers, Jerome, Pacian of

Barcelona, Peter Chrysologus, and Sedulius, the fifth-century poet. So, long before Ellen White in the Victorian Period, some church-men and scholars cited from John 7:53-8:11. This is thus a good introduction or rehearsal of what was available on this matter, before Ellen White made her appearance. I am now ready to turn my focus on Ellen White and her possible sources on this pericope and especially on the extra words that are not in the Bible.

10. The Case of Ellen White and These Rare Words

Ellen White was in Australia in 1898 and Conybeare published his article with the words of the sins on the ground in 1895.¹⁶ Did she get a copy of the *Expositor* of 1895 in Australia on her desk? In the 1890's, it was Marian Davis who helped her writing *The Desire of Ages*. Did Marian add these words from Conybeare into the text?

11. Sources and Manner of Help of Ellen White with *Desire of Ages*

The writing of R. W. Olsen and R. Graybill published on the 23rd of May 1979 indicates the sources that were in the Library of Ellen White.¹⁷ For the order of events in the *Desire of Ages*, she was using the work of Samuel Andrews.¹⁸ Some other books were to be obtained for *Desire of Ages* as indicated in a letter by W. White.¹⁹

In the work of Samuel Andrews 1891 on page 345 is mentioned only the following: “An adulteress is brought before Him, whom He directs to go and sin no more.” That is it. Nothing more, nothing less. S. Andrews is not the origin of the writing of their sins on the ground that Ellen White mentioned in *Desire of Ages*.

Marian Davis was the secretary of Ellen White.²⁰ However, the countercheck of the assistants' influence on Ellen White, was the subject of the investigation of the pessimistic eyes of M. E. L. Andreasen personally for 90 days. He was transformed from skeptical about her to believing and confirming about the role of inspiration.²¹

¹⁶ Frederick C. Conybeare, 406.

¹⁷ R. W. Olson and R. Graybill, “How *The Desire of Ages* Was Written” (EGWE, 1979, SDoc). Olsen was a director of the Ellen White Estate between 1978 and 1990. Ron Graybill spent 13 years at the Estate helping Arthur White and was a history professor in history. See for example <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/authors/graybill-ron>.

¹⁸ Samuel J. Andrews, *The Life of Our Lord upon the Earth*, first published in 1862. The 1891 edition was in Ellen White's library. Andrews' Harmony of the Gospels appears on pp. xxi to xxvii. The mentioning of the *pericope adulterae* is on page 345 bottom in one sentence over two lines reading only: “An adulteress is brought before Him whom He directs to go and sin no more”.

¹⁹ Exhibit 36: Sunday, January 16, 1887, Basel, Switzerland, W. C. White to B. L. Whitney** “Dear Brother: It is Sunday afternoon. I have received no telegram from Olsen and conclude that their meeting is postponed, therefore I decided not to go to London. . . . I also enclose a list of books prepared by Sister Davis which she wishes to have examined by some of your party that we may know if any of them will be valuable to us in our Bible study or the preparation of articles on Bible subjects. After reading the memoranda as prepared by Sister Davis, I see there is little I need to say. Perhaps you will want some of these in the office library. . . . You will note what they say about the cuts in Farrar's Life of Christ. This is just the way they talked at first about those in the Child's Life of Christ. . . . Please buy of Cassell one set [of] Wylie's Prot., one Hanna's *Life of Christ*, and for your library I think you would do well to have a set of Geikie's Hours with the Bible. If you have not already obtained them in New York, you ought to inquire for, and purchase for your library, *The Temple and Its Services*, *Jewish Social Life*, *Andrew's Life of Our Lord*, a good harmony of the Gospels, and other works that will be useful to your wife in preparing notes for the Sabbath School lessons. She ought to have a copy of the latest and best Bible dictionary. --W. C.” ** Elder Whitney (1845-1888) bore heavy responsibilities in the publishing work which was centered in Basel (op. cit. Graybill and Olsen 1979). W. C. White is the son of Ellen White. Whitney was a contributor in writing about foreign Missions of Adventists in Europe and wrote a book about that in 1886.

²⁰ Marian Davis (1847-1904) was a highly skilled secretary and literary assistant to Ellen White. She worked for Ellen White from 1879 until 1904, helping to produce many books, including *The Desire of Ages*.

²¹ See Andreasen's personal testimony on Youtube at the Ohio Camp-meeting in 1955. He stated that he was a young doctoral student at the University of Chicago studying English literature when he saw some phrases in her book *Desire of Ages* and he went to ask her if he could observe her for 90 days to see how she writes. She permitted him. Onycha Holt, “The story of Milian Lauritz (M. L.) Andreasen” at Youtube which is Part 5 of this series read by Onycha Holt from the book, “Without Fear or Favor.” This part captures stories about his family, his visit to Ellen White's home, and his time ministering to the state of Minnesota. Downloaded on October 30, 2024 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLLEZsWLV9A>. See also the text of his autobiography in the biography by Virginia Steinweg, “Visiting in Ellen White's Home”. In *Without Fear or Favor: The Life of M. L. Andreasen*. Online available at <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/books/andreasen/10.htm>. Listening or reading is thus available of the experience in his life with Ellen White doubting and suspicious about her inspiration at first.

When they added something, they had to write for permission by Ellen White first. Sometimes Marian Davis would ask Ellen White to dwell on topics and subjects listed by herself. Then Ellen White did not, because the Spirit did not lead her to do so.²²

Ellen White repeatedly indicated that she is not a scholar or a grammarian and in need of assistance for printing her works.²³ She was helped by her husband between 1858 to 1864 and in the 1890's with *Desire of Ages* by Marian Davis.²⁴

At least three sources, one by Farrar, one by Hanna and one by Andrews should be considered. They will be considered for the addition of the note on the sins written on the ground in the temple of the *pericope adulterae*.

Since 1858 for the *Life of Christ* scrapbooks, she indicated inspiration from God.²⁵ Marian Davis recounted in 1893 that the compilation of *Desire of Ages* is with about 30 or more scrapbooks by Ellen White's hand put together.²⁶ There were also about 50 manuscripts and half a dozen bound volumes. Many other pages too.

Davis had some liberties, but could not edit if the manuscript was not in Ellen White's handwriting.²⁷ Davis also could not add something if it was not in the handwriting of Ellen White. Glossing could be done, but from Ellen White's hand or if sentences were suggested to be added, they had to pass Ellen White's scrutiny. This is very important for us to consider the added information about the sins written on the ground.

²² Exhibit 48: Thursday, June 15, 1893, Wellington, New Zealand, Ellen White to W. C. White

"Dear Son Willie: . . . Marian, you know, cannot be closely confined. She is all enthused with hospital work. I am anxious to get out the life of Christ. Marian specifies chapters and subjects for me to write upon that I do not see really need to be written upon. I may see more light in them. These I shall not enter upon without the Lord's Spirit seems to lead me. The building a tower, the war of kings, these things do not burden my mind, but the subjects of the life of Christ, His character representing the Father, the parables essential for us all to understand and practice the lessons contained in them, I shall dwell upon." Letter 131, 1893, p. 3. (op. cit. Olsen and Graybill 1979).

²³ Exhibit 8: "Sabbath, January 11, 1873, San Francisco, California, Ellen White Diary Entry. We rested well last night. This Sabbath morning opens cloudy. My mind is coming to strange conclusions. I am thinking I must lay aside my writing I have taken so much pleasure in, and see if I cannot become a scholar. I am not a grammarian. I will try, if the Lord will help me, at forty-five years old to become a scholar in the science. God will help me. I believe He will." *Manuscript 3*, 1873, p. 5.

²⁴ "When working on the *Spiritual Gifts* series, from 1858 to 1864, she was assisted by her husband who was a qualified schoolteacher. (See *Selected Messages*, Book I, p. 50). In the 1890's, when *The Desire of Ages* was finally taking shape, her major editorial assistant was Marian Davis" (Olsen and Graybill 1979).

²⁵ "In her first account of Christ's life, written in 1858, Ellen White frequently made such declarations as 'I saw,' 'I then viewed,' 'I was shown,' etc. (p. 10). While she did not lace her later accounts of Christ's life with these expressions, she may actually have seen in vision all the events in Christ's life of which she wrote. In 1889, after mentioning the 'betrayal, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus,' she commented, 'All this had passed before me point by point' (p. 22, par. 3)" (op. cit. Graybill and Olsen 1979).

²⁶ Exhibit 45: Wednesday, March 29, 1893, Marian Davis to W. C. White. "You will perhaps remember some things I said last spring about the necessity of having the matter from articles and scrapbooks, that might be available for use in the life of Christ, copied, so as to be convenient for reference. Perhaps you can imagine the difficulty of trying to bring together points relating to any subject, when these must be gleaned from thirty scrapbooks [of E. G. White materials], a half-dozen bound volumes, and fifty manuscripts, all covering thousands of pages. . . . One thing more as to why so much more is needed for life of Christ than for previous books. The material is much more abundant, the range of subjects much greater; the work demands more in every way. White Estate Document File #393a. (Written from St. Kilda, Melbourne, Australia.) (op. cit. Graybill and Olsen 1979).

²⁷ W. C. White, "There is one thing. . . that not even the most competent editor could do--that is to prepare the manuscript before it is written" [i.e., Marian Davis could not do her editorial work until Ellen White had written the manuscript] (See Exhibit 69)...Marian was authorized to drop out needless words (See Exhibit 67) or at times to change words when necessary(See Exhibit 37). She helped Mrs. White plan a good number of her books, from the first chapter to the last (p. 39, par. 1). Marian was Ellen White's "bookmaker" (p. 41, par. 1). She gleaned material, even isolated sentences (p. 28, par. 6; p. 39, par. 1; p. 30, par. 4), on the life of Christ from Ellen White's diaries, letters, and articles (p. 44, par. 3; p. 29, par. 0), which she pasted in scrapbooks. She drew material for *The Desire of Ages* from these scrapbooks, the bound E. G. White books, and some longer manuscripts (p. 24, par. 4). In organizing the material into chapters, Marian noted areas on which she had nothing from Ellen White's pen. Apparently the two women had such a close working relationship that Marian felt free to make suggestions to Mrs. White as to what she thought might be lacking from the book" (Graybill and Olsen 1979).

Ellen White would wake up at four o'clock in the morning in New Zealand to write on *Desire of Ages*.²⁸ The manuscript was completed on the 16th of July 1896.²⁹

11.1 Farrar

F. W. Farrar could have been used (19th of October 1893).³⁰ He mentioned a manuscript that included the words that sins were written on the ground.

Manuscript U by Farrar: "He wrote on the ground the sins of each one of them."

Desire of Ages: "There, traced before them, were the guilty secrets of their own lives."

If one looks at the syntax of the two sentences from Farrar (1893)³¹ and from *Desire of Ages* (1896-8), there is no one-to-one relationship. In fact, only three words compared: *them*, *the*, and *of*. None of the nouns compared nor the prepositions nor the verbs.

Taken together with the words of W. White, it is important to remember that his mother's secretaries were not allowed to add their own words.³² If Marian Davis used the book by Farrar in 1893³³ and wrote in the incident a paraphrase by herself of the manuscript U in the note she saw in the 1893 Farrar edition after 1893 but before 1898 when it was published,³⁴ then she would have added a sentence that Ellen White may not have seen. This is unlikely. Did Ellen White sit with Farrar's book in her hand while she was composing the *Desire of Ages*? Did her eyes fall on this footnote and did she see the content of the skeptical Farrar mentioning on the manuscript U, "the impossible and irrelevant surmises as to what He wrote," and she ignored this negative statement but included the other, feeling it is just a necessary positive truth? Unlikely if she was concerned from the beginning about accuracy as one of her letters in Olsen and Graybill's article is showing. She said that she is not a scholar or a grammarian and emphasized her inadequacy. She would tend to rather follow Farrar than ignore him, if one must give credibility to her letter's content.

The testimony of M. E. L. Andreasen at the Ohio Camp-meeting in 1955, who spent 90 days with Ellen White to see how she wrote the *Desire of Ages*, did not reveal anything to this effect. She wrote it in her own hand he said, just like Olsen and Graybill said in their article on her writing of *Desire of Ages*. The two witnesses, direct eyewitness, and researcher Olsen and Graybill with the letters of Ellen White and secretaries, correspond 100% on

²⁸ Exhibit 47: Tuesday, May 23, 1893, Wellington, New Zealand, Ellen White Diary Entry. "It is cloudy and raining this morning. I have been writing upon the life of Christ since four o'clock. Oh, that the Holy Spirit may rest and abide upon me, that my pen may trace the words which will communicate to others the light which the Lord has been pleased in His great mercy and love to give to me. Manuscript 80, 1893, p. 20" (op. cit. Graybill and Olsen 1979). Notice the use of the word "trace" by Ellen White here.

²⁹ "Exhibit 64: Friday, July 16, 1896, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia, EGW to Mrs. Wessels. 'Dear Sister Wessels: . . . The manuscript for the 'Life of Christ' is just about to be sent to America. This will be handled by the Pacific Press. I have employed workers to prepare this book, especially Sister Davis, and this has cost me three thousand dollars. Another three thousand will be needed to prepare it to be scattered broadcast through the world in two books. We hope that they will have a large sale. I have devoted little time to these books, for speaking, writing articles for the papers, and writing private testimonies to meet and repress the evils that are coming in, keeps me busy.' Letter 114, 1896, p. 3" (op. cit. Graybill and Olsen 1979).

³⁰ He was the Archdeacon of Westminster from 1883 to 1894, and Dean of Canterbury from 1895 until his death in 1903.

³¹ F. W. Farrar, (1893). *The Life of Christ* (New York: E. P. Button & Company). Page 388 footnote 1 talking about Manuscript U: "The MS. U (the Cod. Nanius in St. Mark's at Venice) has here the curious reading ἔγραψεν εἰς τὴν γῆν ἑνος ἔλαστος αὐτῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας — 'He wrote on the ground the sins of each one of them'; which shows how early began the impossible and irrelevant surmises as to what He wrote. This is the only passage where Christ is said to have written anything." PDF downloaded on February 3, 2022 from <https://ia800501.us.archive.org/25/items/lifeofchrist1893farr/lifeofchrist1893farr.pdf>

³² Exhibit 79: Monday, April 23, 1900, Sunnyside, Cooranbong, Australia, EGW to G. A. Irwin. 'Dear Brother: . . . My copyists you have seen. They do not change my language. It stands as I write it' (op. cit. Olsen).

³³ In Farrar's 1887 edition of the *Life of Christ*, he did not have a special explanatory note on page 267 about Manuscript U. https://ia802505.us.archive.org/4/items/Rev_FW_Farrar_The_Life_of_Christ/Rev_FW_Farrar_The_Life_of_Christ.pdf In Farrar's 1874 edition page 265 there is also not the special note. <https://ia802605.us.archive.org/25/items/lifeofchrist00farriala/lifeofchrist00farriala.pdf>

³⁴ Manuscript 70, 1897, p. 1. Exhibit 69: August 9, 1897, Marian Davis to W. C. White. "I received notice from C. H. Jones that it was planned to publish "Desire of Ages" in the spring of '98, and in order to do this, all the copy must be in the hands of the printers as early as September, '97" (op.cit Olsen).

this issue on the manner of her writing the *Desire of Ages* (for the sound and text of Andreasen on the visit, see a footnote higher up).

The researches of R. Adams and Walther Rea on Ellen White's historiographical skills and manners of writing *Desire of Ages*, are filled with inaccuracies. This was illustrated by later researchers. One can mention and see excerpts of their works by two researchers: David J. Conklin, and Kevin L. Morgan.³⁵

Walther Rea for example, tried to explain how *Desire of Ages* and the work of Hanna on the Life of Christ compared. Many conclusions of Rea stand under serious review and one can compare his conclusions with the online comparison in colors of the correspondences between *Desire of Ages* and Hanna's work by Conklin. Sometimes the utilization is of a scanty or hop-and-skip nature. It seems sometimes to this researcher that Hanna is used as a kind of linguistic Thesaurus of the English Language, a tool to borrow good English words or synonyms from. Ellen White said that she was not a grammarian.

11.2 Hanna

For the statement of the writing of their sins on the ground in *Desire of Ages*, one looks in vain for these in Hanna.³⁶

11.3 Edersheim

Alfred Edersheim of 1883 was not used by Ellen White or Marian Davis for the *Desire of Ages* on the *pericope adulterae* for he left it out of his Book, as he explicitly said.³⁷

11.4 Conybeare

“Bowing his head, was writing with his finger on the earth to declare their sins”

Desire of Ages: “There, traced before them, were the guilty secrets of their own lives.”

There is the 1895 article in English in *Expositor* by F. C. Conybeare about these words on the ground. He mentioned that the 10th century Armenian Eschmiadzin Gospels adds to the story the following: “bowing his head, was writing with his finger on the earth to declare their sins.” In the *Expositor* 5 no. 2 of 1895, this was published by F. C. Conybeare. However, Ellen White finished *Desire of Ages* in the building that is currently housing the Ellen White Museum near Avondale University. She was doing this in Australia in 1896 on the 16th of July, as her letter is indicating. The *Expositor* was published in October of 1895 in the US, so the question is, how soon will it get in the hands of either Ellen White or Marian Davis? Of course, there is still two years before the publication but slipping the phrase into the text of Ellen White was not that easy. Furthermore, the statement of Ellen White is not using the noun “earth” at all. She said “before them.” That is the closest anyone will come to the material that Christ was writing on the ground.

11.5 V. Nersessian

³⁵ David J. Conklin, “Was *Desire of Ages* Plagiarized: An Analysis of the Literary Dependency of *Desire of Ages*, chapter 5” (2011), http://www.ellenwhite.info/desire_of_ages_ch_5_rea_a.htm; Kevin L. Morgan, “Was Ellen White a plagiarist?” *Ministry* (December, 2007): 21-23.

³⁶ William Hanna, *The Life of Christ* (New York: American Tract Society, November 11, 1863). <https://ia801906.us.archive.org/35/items/lifeofchrist00hann/lifeofchrist00hann.pdf>. He wrote the book after a personal visit to Palestine.

³⁷ A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. Vol. II (New York: E. R. Herrick & Company, 1883). He was a Jewish convert to Christianity and a Septuagint scholar as well. Alfred Edersheim is not willing to discuss the *pericope adulterae* for he says it is un-Jewish and probably a fake (A. Edersheim Vol. II Book IV chapter VII page 163 in the footnote): “The reader will observe, that the narrative of the woman taken in adultery, as also the previous verse (St. John vii. 53-viii. 11) have been left out in this History — although with great reluctance. By this it is not intended to characterise that section as Apocryphal, nor indeed to pronounce any opinion as to the reality of some such occurrence. For, it contains much which we instinctively feel to lie like the Master, both in what Christ is represented as saying and as doing. All that we reluctantly feel bound to maintain is, that the narrative in its present form did not exist in the Gospel of St. John, and, indeed, did not have existed. For a summary of the external evidence against the Johannine authorship of the passage, I would refer to Camin Westcott's Note, ad loc. in the Speaker's Commentary." But there is also Internal evidence, and, to my mind at least, most cogent, against its authenticity - at any rate, in its present form. From first to last it is utterly un-Jewish.” <https://ia601905.us.archive.org/10/items/lifetimesofjesus02eder/lifetimesofjesus02eder.pdf>

“and they were seeing their several sins on the stones”

Desire of Ages: “There, traced before them, were the guilty secrets of their own lives.”

A new Armenian manuscript was found and identified as ANA 4, Tirana. The manuscript adds: “and they were seeing their several sins on the stones.” This is how it was translated by V. Nersessian in 2001. But again, it does not compare to Ellen White’s statement which does not use the noun “stones” at all.³⁸

12. Fingerprint in the Style of Ellen White by Using “Traced”

The verb “traced” was a common word used by Ellen White in her own handwriting.³⁹ It can be seen as a fingerprint-identification of Ellen White’s style. A conclusion is drawn that this sentence was not written by Marian Davis or any other secretary but only by Ellen White herself.

13. Conclusion

Another reader may venture into another path, but this reader tends to think that all pointers lean more strongly to the case that Ellen White did not plagiarize any of these sources for these words. We sit with a negative Farrar in 1893, and mention of these words by Conybeare in 1895 in an article, and maybe by Edersheim in his book which Ellen White did not use. Thus, one can only assume that she constructed the phrase without concerning what others said about it. Since Ellen White had no knowledge of the Greek language, it was impossible for her to consult any Greek New Testament with the manuscript additions, such as Codex U, and this may be a strong indication for some that her *Desire of Ages* was inspired by God. It is a subjective choice of an objective fact. “Two men sat behind bars...the one saw mud...the other one stars.”

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³⁸ More recently, one additional MS with this variant reading has been identified, ANA 4, Tirana. A similar expansion is found in the tenth-century Armenian Edschmiadzin Gospels. In this unusual version of the story, Jesus, “bowing his head, was writing with his finger on the earth to declare their sins.” Frederick C. Conybeare, trans., “On the Last Twelve Verses of St. Mark’s Gospel,” *Expositor* 5.2 (1895) 406; repr., David C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 99; and Vrej Nersessian, *The Bible in the Armenian Tradition* (London: The British Library, 2001) 20. This ms then adds, “and they were seeing their several sins on the stones.”

³⁹ “Sometime later, after mentioning several of her books, including *The Desire of Ages*, she declared, ‘In my books, the truth is stated, barricaded by a ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ The Holy Spirit traced these truths upon my heart and mind as indelibly as the law was traced by the finger of God, upon the tables of stone’ (p. 44, par. 7)” (op. cit. Olsen and Graybill 1979). In this sentence she used the word “traced” twice. This was in 1893.

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‘땅바닥에 쓰신 죄’에 대한 고찰: 요한복음 7:53-8:11과 엘렌 G. 화잇의 『시대의 소망』

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한글초록

엘렌 G. 화잇은 1898년 그리스도의 생애를 그린 <시대의 소망>을 출간하였으며, 그 무렵 한나(Hanna), 화라(Farrar), 에더심(Edersheim) 및 코니베어(Conybeare)와 같은 학자들이 유사한 책들을 발간하였다. <시대의 소망>은 표절 혐의를 받는 한편 이를 반박하는 학자들도 있으므로, 요한복음 7:53-8:11과 관련 예수께서 땅에 글씨를 쓰셨으며 <그들 앞에 그려져 있는 것은 그들 자신들의 생애의 죄의 비밀들이었다> 라는 구절을 선택하여 다른 학자들의 글과 비교, 고찰하였다. 이 구절은 흥정역에는 없으나 유사한 표현이 일부 고대 사본에 나타난다. 비슷한 단어들이 1893년 F. 화라의 저서 각주에서 처음 사용되었으나 이후 그의 출간본에서는 삭제되었으며, 1895년 F. C. 코니베어의 논문에서 사용되었다. 당시 엘렌 G. 화잇은 호주 Sunnyside의 집에 거주하고 있었고, “그려져 있는”(Traced)이라는 단어는 엘렌 G. 화잇이 자주 사용하는 용어였으므로 이는 확실히 화잇의 글이며 미국에 있던 그녀의 조력자 중 한 명이 사용한 것이 아님을 알 수 있다. 다른 작가들과 비교한 결과, 그녀가 쓴 구절은 이 저서들 중 어느 것으로부터도 표절되지 않았으나 초기 헬라어 사본에서 찾을 수 있는 내용을 포함하고 있음이 밝혀졌다. 헬라어 지식이 없었던 그녀가 U, 700, al, 264와 같은 헬라어 사본에서 발견되는 것과 동일한 내용을 기술하였음은 놀라운 일이며, 이러한 측면은 『시대의 소망』이 영감받은 글임에 강력한 근거를 제공한다.

주제어

요한복음 7:53-8:11, 페리코페 어덜트레, 『시대의 소망』, 표절, 코니베어(Conybeare)