Responding Rightly to the Prophets
Alberto R. Timm /5

Understanding the Spirit of Prophecy:
Some Key Questions and Principles
Samuel Koranteng-Pipim /21

Looking Ahead Through
the Prophet’s Eyes
Hedwig Jemison /39

My Telescope
S. M. I. Henry /50

The Scriptures a Sufficient Guide
Ellen G. White /55

Asleep in Jesus
C. Raymond Holmes /60

Letters /2
A “Mother in Israel” Betty Lou Hartlein /3
Seventh-day Adventists Believe in the Gift of Prophecy
From Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . /13
Previous Issues of ADVENTISTS AFFIRM /64
Statement of Mission /67
Jesus’ warnings regarding how we treat the prophets speak powerfully to us today.

How will a prophet’s messages be received? Some people think that non-believers might distort or even reject a prophet’s message, but certainly God’s own people would never do so. The message, after all, bears the divine credentials. Yet the reality is that even God’s sincere people can unconsciously use unrealistic approaches toward the prophets and their messages.

Describing the attitude of God’s people before their Babylonian captivity, 2 Chronicles 36:15, 16 tells us that “the Lord God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers . . . because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy” (NKJV, throughout this article).

During Christ’s earthly ministry He faced at least five major unbalanced approaches to the prophetic gift. We will briefly consider each misguided approach as well as the way in which Christ tried to correct it. What we discover should help us to avoid repeating the mistakes of past generations.

1. Christ reproved the human tendency to praise ancient prophets while rejecting contemporary ones.

The Bible records many instances where God’s people resisted accepting a contemporary prophet. While praising an ancient prophet for having rebuked the sins of a past generation, God’s people were reluctant to accept the prophetic rebukes that dealt specifically with their own unsuitable behavior.

Jesus addressed this problem when He stated, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been
partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’ . . . Therefore, indeed, I send you
prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them
you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city” (Mt 23:29, 30, 34).

**Faithful to Scripture?**

Some people today echo this same way of thinking. They undermine the prophetic gift’s
modern manifestation in the life and work of Ellen G. White, claiming that by so doing they
are “more faithful” to the established canon of Scripture. However, faithfulness to the Bible
requires us to reject only those prophets who prove to be false, not all extra-canonical
prophets. The apostle John wrote: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits,
whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 Jn
4:1). Scripture gives us a positive command concerning those who pass the tests: “Do not
despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thess 5:20, 21).

**Not New**

Though today we see people abandoning or downplaying faith in the Lord’s messenger, such
activities in the Seventh-day Adventist church are not new. Ellen G. White and our pioneers
faced similar challenges to her work in the early days of our movement. In response, James
White wrote, “The position that the Bible and the Bible alone, is the rule of faith and duty,
does not shut out the gifts which God set in the church. To reject them is shutting out that
part of the Bible which presents them [such as 1 Cor 12; Eph 4:8, 11-16; Rev 14:12, 19:10].
We say, Let us have a whole Bible, and let that, and that alone, be our rule of faith and duty.
Place the gifts where they belong, and all is harmony” (Review and Herald, Oct. 3, 1854,
emphasis original).

Uriah Smith devoted an editorial to the topic in the Review of January 13, 1863, titling it,
“Do We Discard the Bible by Endorsing the Visions?” In brief, he answered, “When we
claim to stand on the Bible and the Bible alone, we bind ourselves to receive, unequivocally
and fully, all that the Bible teaches,” including its teaching on spiritual gifts in the last days,
which Smith went on to set forth.

Similarly, in a five-part series in the Review on the gift of prophecy in the Seventh-day
Adventist movement, General Conference president George I. Butler wrote about the
objection that the Bible is sufficient, and that therefore we do not need the gifts: “If all
Scripture is profitable, we suppose that those portions are [also profitable] which teach the
perpetuity of spiritual gifts, and that tell us they will be in the church in the last days, and tell
us how to distinguish between the false and genuine” (Review and Herald, June 9, 1874).

These representative statements will suffice to show that the situation today is not unique or
new. Though we may be dismayed to see such views in the church, we should be neither
surprised nor disheartened by them.

Jesus Himself warned us when He declared to His disciples, “He who hears you hears Me, he
who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects him who sent Me” (Lk 10:16).
With this in mind, it is clear that if Ellen White was a true prophetess, as we believe she was,
any conscious attempt to undermine confidence in her prophetic messages is a direct
reproach upon God who sent her to be a prophetic voice in our midst.

2. Christ reproved the human tendency to elevate the human messenger at the expense of the divine message.

Those who profess to accept contemporary prophets run the very real risk of replacing
necessary faithfulness to the divine message with their personal admiration for the human
messenger. In many cases, that admiration can end up overshadowing, intentionally or
unintentionally, personal commitment to the prophetic message.

During His earthly ministry Christ encountered people who claimed to be sons and daughters
of Abraham without being willing to follow Abraham’s example (see Jn 8:39). Similarly, He noted that some people pretended to be followers of Moses without living in harmony with that great leader’s teachings (see Jn 5:45-47). Christ rebuked such show-off hypocrisy in the following words: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Mt 7:21).

**Badge of Allegiance**

Similarly, we may encounter people today who proclaim their devotion to Ellen G. White but whose lives are out of harmony in significant ways with the teachings, standards, and attitudes she upheld. It is not enough to talk much of Ellen White or even to adopt certain aspects of diet, dress, or behavior as a “badge of allegiance” to her if our characters are not transformed, if we do not give evidence that the love of Jesus illuminates our hearts and shines out in our actions. Mrs. White wrote, “By the power of His grace manifested in the transformation of character the world is to be convinced that God has sent His Son as its Redeemer. No other influence that can surround the human soul has such power as the influence of an unselfish life. The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian” (The Ministry of Healing, p. 470).

Contemporary biographical studies of Ellen White may be of great value in helping us better to appreciate her writings, but there is always the danger of making even this a substitute for applying her teachings in our lives. We run the risk of emphasizing the person over and above the divine messages God communicated through her. Far more important than just knowing whether she was tall or short, fat or thin, is the experiential knowledge of the saving message revealed throughout her writings.

3. **Christ reproved the human tendency to emphasize what one likes in a prophetic message while ignoring or rejecting what one does not like.**

Even if one accepts the existence of both ancient and modern prophetic messages, there still remains the very real danger of losing their overall thematic balance by emphasizing only those topics that are most attractive and appealing to us while overlooking those that we do not like so well.

In Christ’s day, the most widespread example of this distorted method of interpretation was a one-sided understanding of the Old Testament messianic prophecies. Without paying sufficient attention to those prophecies that spoke of the suffering of the Messiah (Ps 22; Isa 52:13-53:12; Dan 9:26; etc.), Jesus’ contemporaries placed their hope quite exclusively in the prophecies that portrayed Him as a victorious King (Ps 24; Isa 9:1-7; etc.).

Unfortunately, even some of His closest disciples believed in this one-sided messianic expectation. For instance, when Jesus spoke to His disciples about His approaching death and resurrection, “Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’” But Peter’s rejection of the divine testimony brought Jesus’ strong rebuke: “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (Mt 16:21-23; see also Mk 9:31, 32; Lk 18:31-34; etc.).

**Imbalance**

Today, we can find the same interpretive imbalance in two major trends. First, there is the temptation to emphasize one doctrine while excluding others of equal importance. Some argue only for righteousness by faith; others only for health reform; and still others for end-time events. As important as all three of these doctrines are, no one of them can be regarded as being the message. Rather, they are all parts of one whole, inseparable message. This suggests that we must take inspired writings as a whole. In response to Satan’s temptation, Jesus answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (Mt 4:4, my emphasis). We must take all of God’s instruction to us, allowing the inspired writings themselves, and not us, to determine
the range and scope of our doctrinal beliefs.

Second, some exhibit imbalance when studying inspired writings by allowing their own feelings to decide what is relevant today versus what is cultural. Usually, what one likes is accepted as pertinent and useful, while what one does not like is regarded as just cultural and no longer applicable. We see a similar expression of the same problem in those who try to set aside some instructions of inspired writings by saying that these were merely the human expressions of the writer.

Mrs. White wrote specifically of this problem in connection with her writings: “Many times in my experience I have been called upon to meet the attitude of a certain class, who acknowledged that the testimonies were from God, but took the position that this matter and that matter were Sister White’s opinion and judgment. This suits those who do not love reproof and correction, and who, if their ideas are crossed, have occasion to explain the difference between the human and the divine.

“If the preconceived opinions or particular ideas of some are crossed in being reproved by testimonies, they have a burden at once to make plain their position to discriminate between the testimonies, defining what is Sister White’s human judgment, and what is the word of the Lord. Everything that sustains their cherished ideas is divine, and the testimonies to correct their errors are human—Sister White’s opinions. They make of none effect the counsel of God by their tradition” (Selected Messages, 3:68, my emphasis).

**Tension**

Without question, we can see in inspired writings a constant tension between universal principles and their application in a particular time and place. And we feel the tension in our own souls when the instruction we read crosses the grain of our own ideas and inclinations. But we cannot play with these writings as children play on a teeter-totter. We must never forget that universal principles always apply, even if we do not like them or if the inspired writings in which they came were speaking to a specific cultural setting.

If we take seriously Jesus’ advice to live “by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4), then we cannot allow our own personal biases and feelings to be the final judges of Scripture.

**4. Christ reproved the human tendency to be satisfied with a superficial reading of inspired writings.**

Another major distortion in understanding inspired writings is the possibility of not going far enough in the truth-searching process. Satisfied with only a superficial knowledge, many people are inclined either to think that they already know all that can be known or to imagine that there is no real need for them to search further.

Jesus called for more than a superficial reading of the Scriptures when He warned in His Sermon on the Mount: “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:20). He pointed to the deeper meaning of Scripture by stating time and again, “You have heard that it was said to those of old . . . . But I say to you . . . “ (see vv. 21-48).

**A Great Sin**

Shallowness in understanding the content of inspired writings is one of the greatest sins of our generation. Ellen White observed: “We are living in an age when almost everything is superficial. There is but little stability and firmness of character, because the training and education of children from their cradle is superficial. Their character is built upon sliding sand. Self-denial and self-control have not been molded into their characters” (Child Guidance, p. 184). Busy with numerous time-consuming options provided by technology and modern communication, contemporary Christians are tempted today more than ever before to lean towards a philosophical, anti-doctrinal form of religion.
Ellen White warned us against trusting a mere “intellectual religion” (Steps to Christ, p. 35; see also Evangelism, p. 682). But she also declared that “ignorance will not increase the humility or spirituality of any professed follower of Christ” (Testimonies for the Church, 3:160). This is why we are encouraged “to reach the very height of intellectual greatness,” becoming “giants in the understanding of Bible doctrines and the practical lessons of Christ” (ibid., 4:413, 415).

**Thorough Study Needed**

To become a “giant” in understanding inspired writings, one must try not to overlook any of the counsel on the particular point one may be studying. It is altogether too easy for sincere people to read one statement and think they have the entire truth of the matter, as in this passage from Mrs. White about kneeling for prayer:

“I have received letters questioning me in regard to the proper attitude to be taken by a person offering prayer to the Sovereign of the universe. Where have our brethren obtained the idea that they should stand upon their feet when praying to God? One who has been educated for about five years in Battle Creek was asked to lead in prayer before Sister White should speak to the people. But as I beheld him standing upright upon his feet while his lips were about to open in prayer to God, my soul was stirred within me to give him an open rebuke. Calling him by name, I said, ‘Get down upon your knees.’ This is the proper position always” (Selected Messages, 2:311).

Does this mean that every prayer must be offered on one’s knees? Mrs. White herself evidently did not think so, for she offered certain consecration prayers after preaching while she and the congregation were on their feet or the congregation was seated (see Selected Messages, 3:268-270). She noted that one could pray while walking or working (ibid., 2:316). Her family sat, not knelt, at the table for the blessing on the food, and she followed rather than rebuked the common Adventist practice of her day for the congregation at church to stand, not kneel, for the benediction. But for the major prayers in which we offer our petitions to God—in private prayer at home, and in the main prayer at church, as in the statement quoted above—she urged that we kneel before our Lord.

Earnestness and a heart quick to obey do not relieve us of the responsibility to be thorough in our study of the Lord’s instructions to us. Jesus calls us to be more than superficial students. Whether the matter under study is a point of behavior or of doctrinal understanding, we should be deep students who take to heart Paul’s admonition to be among those “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15).

**5. Christ reproved the human tendency to accept the theory of truth as revealed in inspired writings but not to live in harmony with it.**

Perhaps the most dangerous situation in which people can place themselves is to profess to believe inspired writings without allowing those writings to sanctify their lives. This generates a serious division between the theoretical basis of religion and its practical outworking in the daily life. Those in such a situation usually become more critical of other people’s behavior than of their own and thus do not feel any real need to change their own lives.

During Jesus’ day, many of the teachers of the law, as well as the Pharisees, were in a hopeless state, humanly speaking (see Mt 23). Describing them several times as “hypocrites,” the Lord also compared them to cups cleaned on the outside but dirty on the inside (vv. 25, 26) and to tombs “whitewashed” on the outside but “full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness” on the inside (v. 27).

**Laodicea**

God’s message to the end-time Laodicean church reveals a similar problem. The book of Revelation portrays the Laodiceans as people unconsciously deluded by their own situation.
Revelation 3:17 declares: “You say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.”

In both 1857 and 1859 Ellen White published Testimony tracts (numbers 3 and 5) in which the first article was about the Laodicean message, applying it to the sabbath-keeping Adventist believers. (These now appear in Testimonies for the Church, 1:141-146, 185-195.) Many had felt secure in their knowledge of “the truth,” but they had not let the truth change them. Some made money their god, others fashion; some were so consumed with criticizing the faults of others that they had no time or inclination to consider their own shortcomings. Their greatest need was to hear the counsel of the True Witness and turn to Him to fulfill their lack—of which they were scarcely aware!

For all her privileges, is the church today in a better condition? Do our lives reflect the glory and the urgency of the truths we profess to believe? Or do we exhibit even more compromise with the world than ever before?

The only hope for those who nourish such a muddled approach to prophetic messages is for them, with humility of heart, to ground their spiritual lives upon Christ’s unfailing words (see Mt 7:24-27; Jn 5:39). Such individuals must allow Christ’s words to sanctify their own lives: “Sanctify them by Your truth; Your word is truth” (Jn 17:17, my emphasis). This implies, according to the apostle Paul, that we both “confess” and “believe” the mighty Savior revealed in the Scriptures (Rom 10:8-13). When we truly do this, our lives will testify to the power of the message we proclaim.

**Conclusion**

As sons and daughters of God, we must develop a consistent approach to inspired writings. That approach must be based upon the principles expressed in two passages of Scripture—Matthew 4:4: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God,” and Deuteronomy 4:2: “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it, that you may keep the commands of the Lord your God which I command you.” This requires that we overcome, by God’s grace, our human tendencies to (1) praise the ancient prophets while at the same time rejecting contemporary ones; (2) replace the divine message by the human messenger; (3) emphasize what we like about the prophetic message while ignoring or rejecting what we do not like; (4) be satisfied with a superficial reading of the inspired writings; and (5) accept the theory of truth revealed in the inspired writings without living in harmony with it.

Unconditional faithfulness to God, obeying the inspired writings, might not be the easiest way to live, but it is the only way we can actually claim the promise of 2 Chronicles 20:20: “Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.” May the Lord strengthen us to live today, and every day of our lives, in faithfulness to Him and to His Word.
Seventh-day Adventists Believe in the Gift of Prophecy

Excerpts from "Seventh-day Adventists Believe..."

What does the Bible tell us about the gift of prophecy? How does Ellen G. White fit in?

The New Testament gives prophecy a prominent place among the gifts of the Holy Spirit, once ranking it first and twice second among the ministries most useful to the church (see Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). It encourages believers to desire especially this gift (1 Cor 14:1, 39).

The New Testament suggests that prophets had the following functions:

1. They assisted in founding of the church.

The church was "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph 2:20, 21).

2. They initiated the church's mission outreach.

It was through prophets that the Holy Spirit selected Paul and Barnabas for their first missionary journey (Acts 13:1, 2) and gave direction as to where missionaries should labor (Acts 16:6-10).

3. They edified the church.

"He who prophesies," Paul said, "edifies the church." Prophecies are spoken "to men for their upbuilding, and encouragement and consolation" (1 Cor 14:4, 3 RSV). Along with other gifts, God gave prophecy to the church to prepare believers "for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12).

4. They united and protected the church.
Prophets helped to bring about "the unity of the faith," protecting the church against false doctrines so believers would "no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming" (Eph 4:14 NIV).

5. They warned of future difficulties.


6. They confirmed the faith in times of controversy.

At the first church council the Holy Spirit guided the church to a decision on a controversial issue dealing with the salvation of Gentile Christians. Then, through prophets, the Spirit reaffirmed the believers in the true doctrine. After conveying the council's decision to the membership, "Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen ["confirm," KJV] the brothers" (Acts 15:32 NIV).

Post-Biblical Prophets and the Bible

The prophetic gift produced the Bible itself. In post-biblical times it is not to supersede or add to Scripture, because the canon of Scripture is now closed.

The prophetic gift functions in the end-time much as it did in the time of the apostles. Its thrust is to uphold the Bible as the basis of faith and practice, to explain its teachings, and to apply its principles to daily life. It is involved in establishing and edifying the church, enabling it to carry out its divinely appointed mission. The prophetic gift reproves, warns, guides, and encourages both individuals and the church, protecting them from heresy and unifying them on Bible truths.

Post-biblical prophets function much like prophets such as Nathan, Gad, Asaph, Shemaiah, Azariah, Eliezer, Ahijah, and Obed, Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Simeon, John the Baptist, Agabus, Silas, Anna, and Philip's four daughters, who lived in Bible times, but whose testimonies never became a part of the Bible. The same God who spoke through the prophets whose writings are in the Bible inspired these prophets and prophetesses. Their messages did not contradict the previously recorded divine revelation.

Testing the Prophetic Gift.

Because the Bible warns that before Christ's return false prophets will arise, we must investigate carefully all claims to the prophetic gift. "Do not treat prophecies with contempt," Paul said. "Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thess 5:20-22 NIV; cf. 1 Jn 4:1).

The Bible specifies several guidelines by which we can distinguish the genuine prophetic gift from the spurious.

1. Does the message agree with the Bible?

"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa 8:20). This text implies that messages of any prophet ought to be in harmony with God's law and testimony throughout the Bible. A later prophet must not contradict earlier prophets. The Holy Spirit never contradicts His previously given testimony, for God "does not change like shifting
shadows" (James 1:17 NIV).

2. Do the predictions come true?

"How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him" (Deut 18:21, 22 NIV; cf. Jer 28:9). Though predictions may comprise a comparatively small part of the prophetic message, their accuracy must be demonstrated.

3. Is Christ's incarnation recognized?

"By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God" (1 Jn 4:2, 3). This test demands more than a simple acknowledgment that Jesus Christ lived on earth. The true prophet must confess the biblical teaching on Christ's incarnation--must believe in His deity and pre-existence, His virgin birth, true humanity, sinless life, atoning sacrifice, resurrection, ascension, intercessory ministry, and second advent.

4. Does the prophet bear good or bad "fruit"?

Prophecy comes through the Holy Spirit's inspiring "holy men of God" (2 Pet 1:21). We can discern false prophets by their fruits. "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit" Jesus said, "nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matt 7:16, 18-20).

This counsel is crucial in evaluating a prophet's claim. It speaks first of the prophet's life. It does not mean that the prophet must be absolutely perfect. Scripture says that Elijah was a man of "like passions as we are" (James 5:17 KJV). But the prophet's life should be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit, not by works of the flesh (see Gal 5:19-23).

Second, this principle pertains to the influence of the prophet on others. What results accrue in the lives of those who accept the messages? Do their messages equip God's people for missions and unify them in their faith (Eph 4:12-16)?

Any person claiming to have the prophetic gift should be subjected to these biblical tests. If he or she measures up to these criteria we can have confidence that indeed the Holy Spirit has given that individual the gift of prophecy.

The Spirit of Prophecy in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

The gift of prophecy was active in the ministry of Ellen G. White, one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church. She has given inspired instruction for God's people living during the time of the end. The world of the early nineteenth century, when Ellen White began to deliver God's messages, was a man's world. Her prophetic call put her under critical scrutiny. Passing the biblical tests, she went on to minister through her spiritual gift for 70 years. From 1844, when she was 17, until 1915--the year of her death--she had more than 2,000 visions. During that time she lived and worked in America, Europe, and Australia, counseling, establishing new work, preaching, and writing.

Ellen White never assumed the title of prophetess, but she did not object when others called her by that title. She explained, "Early in my youth I was asked several times, Are you a prophet? I have ever responded, I am the Lord's messenger. I know that many have called me a prophet, but I have made no claim to this title. . . . Why have I not claimed to be a prophet? Because in these days many who boldly claim that they are prophets are a reproach to the cause of Christ; and because my work includes much more than the word 'prophet' signifies."
She prophesied that major changes within Protestantism would bring about a departure from the faith of the Reformation.

To claim to be a prophetess is something that I have never done. If others call me by that name, I have no controversy with them. But my work has covered so many lines that I can not call myself other than a messenger.”

**The Application of Prophetic Tests.**

How does Ellen White's ministry measure against the biblical tests of a prophet?

**1. Agreement with the Bible.**

Her abundant literary production includes tens of thousands of Bible texts, coupled often with detailed expositions. Careful study has shown that her writings are consistent, accurate, and in full agreement with the Scriptures.

**2. The accuracy of predictions.**

Ellen White's writings contain a relatively small number of predictions. Some are in the process of being fulfilled, while others still await fulfillment. But those that can be tested have been fulfilled with an amazing accuracy. Two instances that demonstrate her prophetic insights follow.

a. **The rise of modern spiritualism.**

In 1850, when spiritualism--the movement that touts communication with the spirit world and the dead--had just arisen, Ellen White identified it as a last-day deception and predicted its growth. Although at that time the movement was decidedly anti-Christian, she foresaw that this hostility would change, and that it would become respectable among Christians (Early Writings, p. 59). Since that time spiritualism has spread worldwide, gaining millions of adherents. Its anti-Christian stance has changed; indeed, many call themselves Christian spiritualists, claiming that they have the true Christian faith and that "Spiritualists are the only religionists who have used the promised gifts of Christ, by which gifts they heal the sick, and demonstrate a future conscious and progressive existence." They even assert that spiritualism "gives you the knowledge of all the great systems of religion, and still more, it gives you more knowledge of the Christian Bible than all the Commentaries combined. The Bible is a book of Spiritualism."

b. **A close cooperation between Protestants and Roman Catholics.**

During Ellen White's life a gulf existed between Protestants and Roman Catholics that seemed to preclude any cooperation between the two. Anti-Catholicism raged among Protestants. She prophesied that major changes within Protestantism would bring about a departure from the faith of the Reformation. Consequently, differences between Protestants and Catholics would diminish, leading to a bridging of the gulf separating the two (The Great Controversy, pp. 571, 588).

The years since her death have seen the rise of the ecumenical movement, the establishment of the World Council of Churches, the Catholic Church's Vatican II, and Protestant ignorance and even outright rejection of the Reformation views of prophetic interpretation. These major changes have broken down barriers between Protestants and Catholics, leading to growing cooperation.

**3. The acknowledgment of Christ's incarnation.**

Ellen White wrote extensively on the life of Christ. His role as Lord and Saviour, His atoning sacrifice at the cross, and His present intercessory ministry dominate her literary works. Her
book *The Desire of Ages* has been acclaimed as one of the most spiritual treatises ever written on the life of Christ, while *Steps to Christ*, her most widely distributed book, has led millions to a deep relationship with Him. Her works clearly portray Christ as fully God and fully man. Her balanced expositions fully agree with the biblical view, carefully avoiding the overemphasizing of one nature or the other—a problem that has caused so much controversy throughout the history of Christianity.

Her overall treatment of Christ's ministry is practical. No matter what aspect she deals with, her overriding concern is to bring the reader into a more intimate relationship with the Saviour.

**4. The influence of her ministry.**

More than a century and a half has passed since Ellen White received the prophetic gift. Her church and the lives of those who have heeded her counsels reveal the impact of her life and messages.

"Although she never held an official position, was not an ordained minister, and never received a salary from the church until after the death of her husband, her influence shaped the Seventh-day Adventist Church more than any other factor except the Holy Bible." She was the moving force behind the establishment of the church's publishing work, schools, medical-missionary work, and the worldwide missionary outreach that has made the Seventh-day Adventist church one of the largest and fastest growing Protestant missionary organizations.

The material that she wrote fills more than 120 books, 200 tracts and pamphlets, and 4,600 periodical articles. Sermons, diaries, special testimonies, and letters comprise another 50,000 pages of manuscript materials.

The scope of this material is astounding. Ellen White's expertise was not limited to a few narrow fields. The Lord gave her counsel in matters of health, education, family life, temperance, evangelism, the publishing ministry, proper diet, medical work, and many other areas. Perhaps her writing in the field of health is the most amazing because of the way her insights, some given more than a century ago, have been verified by modern science.

Her writings focus on Jesus Christ and uphold the high moral and ethical values of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Although many of her writings are directed to the Seventh-day Adventist church, large portions have been appreciated by wider audiences. Her popular book *Steps to Christ* has been translated into around 150 languages and has sold more than 15 million copies. Her greatest work is the well-received five-volume Conflict of the Ages Series, which details the great controversy between Christ and Satan from the origin of sin until its eradication from the universe.

The impact of her writings on individuals is profound. Recently the Institute of Church Ministry of Andrews University did a study comparing the Christian attitude and behavior of Adventists who regularly read her books and those who do not. Their research strongly underscores the impact her writings have on those who read them. The study reached these conclusions: "Readers have a closer relationship with Christ, more certainty of their standing with God, and are more likely to have identified their spiritual gifts. They are more in favor of spending for public evangelism and contribute more heavily to local missionary projects. They feel more prepared for witnessing and actually engage in more witnessing and outreach programs. They are more likely to study the Bible daily, to pray for specific people, to meet in fellowship groups, and to have daily family worship. They see their church more positively. They are responsible for winning more converts."

**The Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible.**
The writings of Ellen White are not a substitute for Scripture. They cannot be placed on the same level. The Holy Scriptures stand alone, the unique standard by which her writings, and all others, must be judged and to which they must be subject.

1. The Bible the supreme standard.

Seventh-day Adventists fully support the Reformation principle of sola scriptura, the Bible as its own interpreter and the Bible alone as the basis of all doctrines. The founders of the church developed fundamental beliefs through study of the Bible; they did not receive these doctrines through the visions of Ellen White. Her major role during the development of their doctrines was to guide in the understanding of the Bible and to confirm conclusions reached through Bible study.

Ellen White herself believed and taught that the Bible was the ultimate norm for the church. In her first book, published in 1851, she said, "I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged" (see Early Writings, p. 78). She never changed this view. Many years later she wrote, "In His Word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience" (The Great Controversy, p. vii). In 1909, during her last address to a general session of the church, she opened the Bible, held it up before the congregation, and said, "Brethren and sisters, I commend to you this Book."

In response to believers who considered her writings an addition to the Bible, she wrote, saying, "I took the precious Bible and surrounded it with the several Testimonies for the Church, given for the people of God... You are not familiar with the Scriptures. If you had made God's word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the Testimonies. It is because you have neglected to acquaint yourselves with God's inspired Book that He has sought to reach you by simple, direct testimonies, calling your attention to the words of inspiration which you had neglected to obey, and urging you to fashion your lives in accordance with its pure and elevated teachings" (Testimonies for the Church, 5:664, 665).

2. A guide to the Bible.

She saw her work as that of leading people back to the Bible. "Little heed is given to the Bible," she said, therefore "the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light" (Colporteur Ministry, p. 125). "The Word of God," she wrote, "is sufficient to enlighten the most beclouded mind and may be understood by those who have any desire to understand it. But notwithstanding all this, some who profess to make the Word of God their study are found living in direct opposition to its plainest teachings. Then, to leave men and women without excuse, God gives plain and pointed testimonies, bringing them back to the word that they have neglected to follow" (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 663).

3. A guide in understanding the Bible.

Ellen White considered her writings a guide to a clearer understanding of the Bible. "Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the Testimonies, simplified the great truths already given and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse." "The written testimonies are not given to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed" (ibid., p. 665).
4. A guide to apply Bible principles.

Much of her writings apply the biblical counsels to everyday life. Ellen White said that she was "directed to bring out general principles, in speaking and in writing, and at the same time specify the dangers, errors, and sins of some individuals, that all might be warned, reproved, and counseled" (ibid., p. 660). Christ had promised such prophetic guidance to His church. As Ellen White noted, "The fact that God has revealed His will to men through His Word, has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Saviour, to open the Word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings" (*The Great Controversy*, p. vii).

The Challenge to the Believer.

Revelation's prophecy that the "testimony of Jesus" would manifest itself through the "spirit of prophecy" in the last days of earth's history challenges every one not to take an attitude of indifference or disbelief, but to "test everything" and "hold on to the good." There is much to gain— or lose— depending on whether we carry out this biblically mandated investigation. Jehoshaphat said, "'Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper'" (2 Chron 20:20). His words ring true today, as well.

Notes:


2. Ellen G. White, "A Messenger," *Review and Herald*, July 26, 1906, p. 8. The title "the Lord's messenger" was given by inspiration (ibid.).


From *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), pp. 217-229
Understanding the Spirit of Prophecy: Some Key Questions and Principles

by Samuel Koranteng-Pipim

What does the Spirit of Prophecy mean to us? How can we interpret it correctly?

With the exception of biblical writers and the former Russian communist leader, Vladimir I. Lenin, Ellen G. White is possibly the most translated author of all time. The number of different languages that her works have been put into exceeds those of Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, German socialist philosopher Karl Marx, English playwright William Shakespeare, English mystery writer Agatha Christie, German fairy-tale collaborators Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, British author Ian Fleming (creator of the James Bond thrillers), or American novelist Ernest Hemingway. [1]

By the close of her seventy-year ministry, her literary productions totaled approximately 100,000 pages, or the equivalent of 25 million words. They deal with a wide range of subjects--spirituality, theology, education, health, family, etc. Massive amounts of these materials are preserved as letters, diaries, interviews, sermons, general manuscripts, periodical articles, pamphlets, and published books. Based on the sheer volume and quality of her writings, Ellen G. White could have published some 250 doctoral dissertations of 400 pages each!

But she was more than a prolific author. While the world is only now coming to appreciate her deep spiritual and practical insights, Seventh-day Adventists throughout their history have recognized her as a recipient of the true gift of prophecy. They refer to her writings as the Spirit of Prophecy or the Testimonies. [2]

In recent times, however, liberal scholars within our ranks have raised questions about her writings, even as they do with the Bible. And throughout our history, offshoot groups have misused and misrepresented her writings. These and other influences have sometimes created uncertainty or confusion in the minds of church members about the writings of Ellen G. White. [2] We will address some of the key issues regarding her works and offer some principles on how to understand them.
A. Some Key Questions

What is the Spirit of Prophecy?

The book of Revelation teaches that God's end-time remnant church keeps "the commandments of God" and has "the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 12:17). In a later chapter of that book, we are told that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (19:10, emphasis mine).

The apostle Paul also employs such language, using the phrases "testimony of Christ," "testimony of God," and "testimony of our Lord" (1 Cor 1:6; 2:1; 2 Tim 1:8). Similarly, the Old Testament prophet Isaiah uses the expression "the law and the testimony" (Isa 8:19-20) to refer to the messages given by God's true prophets in earlier times.

Thus, for Seventh-day Adventists, the reference to the "commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 12:17; cf. Rev 20:4) suggests that God's end-time people will be characterized by keeping the commandments of God (all ten of them, including the seventh-day Sabbath) and by the testimony of Jesus, that is, the everlasting gospel given through God's true prophets (including Ellen G. White). Thus, our Fundamental Beliefs #17 states in part: "One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White."

But some argue that we should not equate "the testimony of Jesus" or "the spirit of prophecy" with the writings of Ellen White. While indeed we should not think that these terms refer only to Mrs. White and her work, the term "testimony of Jesus" (or "spirit of prophecy") can be used legitimately for all the messages of instruction, encouragement, and correction proclaimed by God's chosen messengers, His prophets. (See relevant verses in Rev 1:2, 9; 6:9; 12:17; 19:10; and 22:16.)

Because the gift of prophecy is an identifying mark of God's end-time remnant church (Rev 12:17) and because we believe that this gift was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White, the Seventh-day Adventist church is justified in referring to her writings as the Spirit of Prophecy or the Testimonies, even as we would to all inspired messages from God. Therefore, our Fundamental Beliefs #17 notes: "As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10.)"

Should all Adventists believe in the Spirit of Prophecy?

Yes, indeed! The Bible says we should accept the Spirit of Prophecy. In 1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21 we are told, "Despise not prophesying. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." First Corinthians 12 also says there are many gifts in the church, including the gift of prophecy. All these gifts will be present in the church until Jesus comes (Eph 4:7-13). If we accept the other gifts of the Spirit, we must accept the gift of prophecy as well. In fact, as we have noted, the Bible singles out this gift as one identifying characteristic of the end-time church (Rev 12:17; 19:10). Whenever God gives a gift to His people, they must respectfully accept it.

Moreover, belief in the Spirit of Prophecy is one of the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, the body of doctrines identifying us as a church. Therefore, before one is baptized, it is important to be carefully instructed to subscribe to all 27 of the Fundamental Beliefs, including the teaching on the Spirit of Prophecy. If after baptism a member cannot conscientiously adhere to this or any other doctrine, the church should respect the right of that person to withdraw from membership.
At times, when members or church employees blatantly oppose our understanding of this biblical doctrine, the church may have to encourage them to honorably withdraw from its fellowship, or even insist that they do so. To be a Seventh-day Adventist and to remain one requires a belief in this biblical teaching and, at minimum, a respect for the church's conviction that the genuine gift of prophecy was manifested in the life and work of Ellen G. White. When one of its members begins to undermine its teachings, the church should diligently try to win that member back to full agreement with the body of believers or, if this is not possible, take steps to help the person find another denomination whose beliefs are more like his own.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the writings of Mrs. White, as a genuine manifestation of the Spirit of prophecy, are a precious gift from God, to be cherished and appreciated. These writings, like the Bible, are to help prepare us for heaven. Even now, as they lift our gaze toward things eternal, they give us a foretaste of what God has prepared for those who love Him.

**What is the relationship between the Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible?**

Ellen G. White understood that the Bible alone constitutes the Christian's standard or norm for teaching and practice. She wrote, "The Word of God is the great detector of error; to it we believe everything must be brought. The Bible must be our standard for every doctrine and preaching. We must study it reverently. We are to receive no one's opinion without comparing it with the Scriptures. Here is divine authority which is supreme in matters of faith. It is the Word of the living God that is to decide all controversies" (The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, pp. 44, 45; cf. The Great Controversy, p. 595).

Sister White herself beautifully explained the relationship between her writings and the Bible, referring to her works as the "lesser light" pointing to the Bible, the "greater light." She wrote: "Little heed is given to the Bible, and

the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light" (Colporteur Ministry, p. 125).

Another analogy, developed by Mrs. S. M. I. Henry, is that of a telescope and star. Mrs. White's writings are like the telescope, and the truths of the Bible are like the stars. A telescope does not project or create new stars. It only helps us to focus on the stars that God has already placed there. Similarly, the writings of Mrs. White help us to focus on the truths revealed in God's Word. And in some cases, we see clearly some of these stars of God's truth that were hiding in obscurity.

These two analogies refute any suggestion that would make Mrs. White's writings a part of the sixty-six books of the Bible canon or even seem like a kind of "third testament" of the Bible. She is not alone in her status as a non-canonical prophet, a true prophet whose works are not included as part of the Bible.

In Bible times some prophets wrote books which became part of the biblical canon. These canonical prophets include such notables as Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Paul, and John. Others, however, such as Enoch, Elijah, and Elisha, wrote no books of the Bible, yet their messages and ministries are preserved in it. Still, there were prophets like the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9) whose messages have not been preserved in the Bible. And finally, there were prophets who actually wrote books which have not been preserved. They include Nathan and Gad (1 Chron 29:29), Shemaiah (2 Chron 12:15), Jasher (Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18), Iddo (2 Chron 12:15; 9:29), Ahijah (2 Chron 9:29), and Jehu (2 Chron 20:34).

But whether included in the Bible or not, the messages delivered by all categories of prophets were authoritative. Ellen G. White was also a true prophet. Though her writings are the "lesser light" pointing to the "greater light" of Scripture, and though they are not a part of...
the Bible, yet like the non-canonical prophets mentioned above, her messages are nonetheless authoritative.

**What is the purpose of the Spirit of Prophecy?**

Since the Bible is the norm for Christian doctrine and practice, why did God give the Spirit of Prophecy writings? Ellen White offers at least five major reasons.

1. **To bring people back to the Word they have neglected.** She wrote: "The word of God is sufficient to enlighten the most beclouded mind and may be understood by those who have any desire to understand it. But notwithstanding all this, some who profess to make the word of God their study are found living in direct opposition to its plainest teachings. Then, to leave men and women without excuse, God gives plain and pointed testimonies, bringing them back to the word that they have neglected to follow" (*Testimonies for the Church*, 5:663).

2. **To vividly impress truths of revelation already revealed.** According to Ellen White, those taking the Bible seriously need the message impressed on the heart, made alive in their hearts:

   "The Lord designs to warn you, to reprove, to counsel, through the testimonies given, and to impress your minds with the importance of the truth of His word. The written testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed. Man's duty to God and to his fellow man has been distinctly specified in God's word, yet but few of you are obedient to the light given. Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the *Testimonies* simplified the great truths already given and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse" (ibid., p. 665).

3. **To call us to holy Christian living.** In 1871, she explained that the *Testimonies* are given so we can order our lives in accordance with the Bible's teachings: "You are not familiar with the Scriptures. If you had made God's word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the *Testimonies*. It is because you have neglected to acquaint yourselves with God's inspired Book that He has sought to reach you by simple, direct testimonies, calling your attention to the words of inspiration which you had neglected to obey, and urging you to fashion your lives in accordance with its pure and elevated teachings" (ibid., 2:605).

Indeed, many can testify that those who diligently study the Spirit of Prophecy alongside the Bible tend to be more spiritual, more active in the church, and more effective soul-winners than those who don't do so.

4. **To help us understand the Scriptures.** Mrs. White's writings have a role to play in hermeneutics, our interpretation of Scripture. While upholding the Bible as the norm and thus referring to her works as the lesser light, Ellen White herself described her two-fold function in the church this way: "God has, in that Word [the Bible], promised to give visions in the 'last days'; not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and to correct those who err from Bible truth" (*Early Writings*, p. 78, latter emphasis mine). Elsewhere she explained that the light God gave her "has been given to correct specious error and to specify what is truth" (*Selected Messages*, 3:32, emphasis mine).

Notice that the writings of Ellen White are not to establish a new rule of faith apart from the Bible. Rather, they have been given the church to "comfort" God's people (when they are in the right path), to "correct" them (when they err from the truth) and to "specify" what is truth (when they are not sure). With so many confusing, conflicting voices involved in biblical interpretation, can anyone doubt the importance and urgency of the Spirit of Prophecy in the hermeneutical enterprise?
Even though her writings should play a major role in hermeneutical issues, she herself makes it clear that her writings are not a short cut or a replacement for serious Bible study. In 1890 she wrote: "God's Word is the unerring standard. The Testimonies are not to take the place of the Word. . . . Let all prove their positions from the Scriptures and substantiate every point of truth from the revealed Word of God" (Evangelism, p. 256).

5. To shield us from error that will come into God's church in the last days. Ellen White referred to errors that will be introduced and entertained in the church as tares among the wheat. She wrote:

"I am instructed that the Lord, by His infinite power, has preserved the right hand of His messenger for more than half a century, in order that the truth may be written out as He bids me write it for publication, in periodicals and books, Why?--Because if it were not thus written out, when the pioneers in the faith shall die, there would be many, new in the faith, who would sometimes accept as messages of truth teachings that contain erroneous sentiments and dangerous fallacies. Sometimes that which men teach as 'special light' is in reality specious error, which, as tares sown among the wheat, will spring up and produce a baleful harvest. And errors of this sort will be entertained by some until the close of this earth's history" (This Day With God, p. 126).

No perceptive Seventh-day Adventist today can seriously doubt the relevance of the above statement. Indeed, in my most recent book Must We Be Silent? I have documented and challenged some of the errors that are currently being entertained in the church—homosexuality, women's ordination, racism, divorce and remarriage, higher criticism, pluralism, and questionable gospel gimmicks and worship styles. I can honestly say that but for the guidance of the Spirit of Prophecy, it would have been very difficult to detect the subtle errors in the arguments of those pushing these unbiblical ideologies.

As we approach the close of the earth's history, we must expect many more dangerous heresies to creep into the church. The writings of Ellen G. White have been given us to alert us in times of uncertainty.

Are her writings merely good suggestions, but not authoritative?

Those wishing to undermine confidence in the writings of Ellen G. White sometimes argue that since her messages are not part of the Bible, her writings are merely inspirational, not authoritative. They consider Mrs. White's writings devotional material without serious theological content.

But are her writings inspiring (like Shakespeare's or Martin Luther King, Jr.'s), but not inspired (like the Bible writers')? Are the messages of canonical prophets inspired and authoritative while those of non-canonical prophets are inspirational but non-authoritative? Are the Spirit of Prophecy writings merely good suggestions that are not binding upon God's end-time people?

The Bible teaches that even though they are not part of the canon of Scripture, the messages communicated by non-canonical prophets are to be received as possessing binding authority. The message of Nathan (a non-canonical prophet) to David, for example, carried divine authority. Because "the Lord sent Nathan to David" (2 Sam 12:1), the message he bore was authoritative, not simply inspirational or pastoral. Similarly, David recognized the authoritative nature of the message by another non-canonical prophet, Gad, "David's seer" (1 Chron 21:9). Conscious of the divine authority of his message, "Gad came to David and said to him, 'Thus says the Lord . . . '" (v. 11). David's response to this non-canonical prophet indicates that he received the message as binding upon him: "So David went up at the word of Gad, which he had spoken in the name of the Lord" (1 Chron 21:19).

A prophetic message, then, is not less binding because it is delivered by a non-canonical prophet. If a message is given by a true prophet of God, it cannot be treated as simply inspirational or pastoral but not authoritative. Just as surely as God held Ahab and Jezebel
accountable for their attitude and response to Elijah's message, so will He hold us accountable for how we treat the messages of God's end-time prophet. According to Ellen White:

"It does not become anyone to drop a word of doubt here and there that shall work like poison in other minds, shaking their confidence in the messages which God has given, which have aided in laying the foundation of this work, and have attended it to the present day, in reproofs, warnings, corrections, and encouragements. To all who have stood in the way of the Testimonies, I would say, God has given a message to His people, and His voice will be heard, whether you hear or forbear. Your opposition has not injured me; but you must give an account to the God of heaven, who has sent these warnings and instructions to keep His people in the right way. You will have to answer to Him for your blindness, for being a stumbling block in the way of sinners" (Selected Messages, 1:43).

Here Ellen White has distinguished between the authority of the message a prophet bears ("You must give an account to the God of heaven, who has sent these warnings . . .") and the role of the messenger ("Your opposition has not injured me"). The prophet has no authority independent of the messages conveyed, no ability to make the decisions for the church or for individuals. Such executive power in Bible times lay with the king, the priests, the elders, and other officials. Prophets are not given this authority, only the commission to convey faithfully the messages God gives to them. It is up to others to decide what shall be done, whether they will obey. When we speak of the authority of the prophet, then, we must understand that it is different from that of a pastor or elder, who has responsibility over what is done in the church. The prophet's responsibility is only to deliver the message of the One who is truly in authority.

Believing that the Holy Spirit "is the author of the Scriptures and of the Spirit of Prophecy [her own writings]" (ibid., 3:30), Mrs. White made this forthright statement about her works: "God is either teaching His church . . . or He is not. This work is of God, or it is not. . . . There is no halfway work in the matter. The Testimonies are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil" (Testimonies for the Church, 4:230).

**Are her letters also authoritative?**

Some argue that although books like Steps to Christ, The Desire of Ages, and Patriarchs and Prophets are inspired and authoritative, Ellen White's letters to individuals or churches are not. The letters, they say, offer good practical advice or counsels, but they are not necessarily inspired or authoritative.

If this argument were valid, one would also have to argue that the letters of John, Peter, or Paul (to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Thessalonians, Philippians, etc.) are not inspired and authoritative. Moreover, since New Testament books like the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles were letters to an individual (Theophilus, Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1), the messages contained in them are not authoritative. But the apostle Peter discredited this view when he referred to the letters of Paul as "scriptures," the result of "wisdom given unto him," adding that those who misinterpret them do so at the peril of their own lives (2 Pet 3:15-16). What is true of Paul's letters is equally true of Luke's, Peter's, John's, James's and those of all true prophets, including Ellen G. White.

Indeed, "prophets' letters carried the same weight of authority as their formal sermons [or books]. In some cases, letters would be more helpful than a sermon because they were written to specific people with specific problems. Letters written to one person or to a church became equally beneficial to others as these letters (and sermons) were copied and widely distributed. People everywhere down through time have identified with these inspired, practical applications of divine principles to the details of life."

In 1906, Ellen White wrote to a man who was slighting her testimonies to him and others by declaring them "to be merely the opinion of Sister White." She made it clear that her letters are to be accorded the same attention as her books. She wrote:
"When I went to Colorado I was so burdened for you that, in my weakness, I wrote many pages to be read at your camp meeting. Weak and trembling, I arose at three o'clock in the morning to write to you. God was speaking through clay. You might say that this communication was only a letter. Yes, it was a letter, but prompted by the Spirit of God, to bring before your minds things that had been shown me. In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper, expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in visions--the precious rays of light shining from the throne" (Selected Messages, 1:27).

In summary, we cannot say that the letters or counsels given by Ellen White, even to individuals, are merely her personal opinions, and thus have no authority. While the specific application of her messages varies with circumstance, place, or time, yet as with the Bible prophets, her writings carry the counsel and authority of God. They have been preserved for us so we can avoid the mistakes of their original recipients and imitate their examples when they were doing right. If we find these writings applying to a certain circumstance in our lives, we can consider that God is speaking through them to us.

B. Some Key Principles

Thus far, I have been addressing questions that are often raised regarding the writings of Ellen G. White. Next, I will offer some principles on how to interpret them. But before pursuing this task, it is important for me to state what may come as a surprise to some readers: We don't need new methods to understand much of the writings of Ellen White! Let me explain what I mean.

Ellen White's writings are not difficult to read or understand. They are not written in Greek or Hebrew, but in plain, simple American English. Most people of average reading ability in English can understand them. Since her writings are clear in themselves, we must be wary whenever we hear people calling for some new or special methods to interpret Ellen White.

For you see, people seeking to revise Adventist doctrines and practices are fond of raising false questions, which we all too often expend unnecessary energy trying to resolve. Before answering such questions, we will do well if we first ask ourselves which part of Ellen White's writings are so obscure as to require a special hermeneutic to understand.

Which of her writings needs special principles to understand?

Which of Ellen White's books or writings are difficult to understand, and why? Her autobiographical works (e.g., Life Sketches and Spiritual Gifts, vol. 2) are plain reading and easy to understand. Her Bible study books (e.g., Patriarchs and Prophets, Prophets and Kings, The Desire of Ages, The Acts of the Apostles, and The Great Controversy) are also clear enough. Similarly, her devotional books (like Steps to Christ, The Sanctified Life, Christ's Object Lessons, In Heavenly Places, Sons and Daughters of God, etc.) are simple, straightforward works that do not require special hermeneutics to understand. Again her health books (e.g., The Ministry of Healing, Medical Ministry, Counsels on Diet and Foods) as well as her home and family books (The Adventist Home, Child Guidance, Letters to Young Lovers) are all simple to read. Furthermore, her articles in Review and Herald, Signs of the Times, The Youth's Instructor, etc. were all written to be read and understood.

Since Ellen White's writings are not difficult to comprehend, we must try to understand why there are calls in some quarters for new principles to interpret her works. It appears to me that, as far as the Spirit of Prophecy is concerned, there are three major areas where our liberal friends have problems.

The first has to do with Mrs. White's writings that deal with end-time events, what scholars...
call "eschatology." The critics don't like our eschatology--our teachings on the Sabbath/Sunday issue, the antichrist, the mark of the beast, the remnant, spiritualism, the time of trouble, etc., and perhaps especially our emphasis on preparing a people to stand in the day of the Lord. Because writings like *The Great Controversy*, *Last Day Events*, and *Early Writings* deal with these issues, some within our ranks are seeking special ways of re-interpreting her writings to avoid believing or teaching the Bible doctrines contained in them.

In the opinion of some of these critical scholars, Ellen G. White's eschatology was culturally conditioned by the nineteenth-century anti-Catholic bias prevalent in her day. Her emphasis on obedience to God is mislabeled a "perfectionistic" outlook. They consider her writings an obstruction to their desire to be part of the ecumenical and tongue-speaking charismatic crowd. Reinterpreting her works is the way for them to get rid of the church's alleged "eschatological paranoia," "apocalyptic sensationalism," and "sectarian mentality and xenophobia."

Second, some of our scholars who have embraced higher criticism and naturalistic evolution find it difficult to uphold the Bible's teaching on a literal six-day creation, a literal worldwide flood in Noah's day, the sanctuary teaching, and other distinctive Adventist doctrines from the Bible. Since Ellen White's writings proclaim and defend these teachings, some are seeking methods of interpreting these writings that would allow them to hold on to their "progressive" views.

Third, while the critics find no problems with Sister White's messages of comfort, they do not appreciate her messages of warning and correction, such as those found in many of the *Testimonies* and those having to do with Christian lifestyle issues.

As long as Ellen White talks about love, acceptance, and forgiveness, the liberals have no problem with her. But once she starts calling attention to lifestyle practices like the use of alcohol, flesh meats, and coffee, immoral practices and relationships, jewelry and Christian adornment, Sabbath observance, etc., some within our ranks immediately have problems with her works. They want some special hermeneutics to allow them to do away with those lifestyle issues they don't like.

The above reasons explain why I suggested that we must be skeptical about calls for new principles to interpret Ellen G. White. Most of these calls are driven by hidden ideologies whose ultimate objective is to jettison our biblically-established doctrines and practices. The fact of the matter is, however, that most of Ellen White's writings are plain and easy to understand. We don't need new methods to understand them. We need a willing heart to do what God requires of us.

With this background, I will now offer a few guidelines on how to interpret the Spirit of Prophecy writings. For after all, while most of her writings are easy to read and understand, we must make sure that we correctly understand and apply them to our situation today.

**1. Simply Read the Books**

One of the reasons why we don't understand the writings of Ellen G. White is that we don't read them. It is ironic that we often find ourselves reading all kinds of books, commentaries, magazines, etc., but hardly any of Ellen G. White's works. Many of us seem to value the opinions of scholars--within and without the church--above that of Mrs. White. Is it any wonder that we are often confused?

Moreover, some of us seem to abdicate our responsibility to study her writings for ourselves, allowing instead some specialist to tell us what Sister White may have said about a particular subject. When we take the pains to check out some of the claims by the scholars, however, we discover that sometimes they inject their own questionable views into what Mrs. White actually taught. I found this to be the case when I was researching for my book *Must We Be Silent?* Many times I discovered that the claims by certain scholars regarding the views of Ellen White on a number of issues were actually a distortion of her position![6]
Let's not simply assume that whatever a person may say about Ellen White's position is necessarily true. Let's adopt the Berean spirit of finding out whether those claims are so (Acts 17:11). A correct understanding of the Spirit of Prophecy requires that we set aside a specific time each day to study God's counsels. Read broadly, not just reading the same books over and over. Begin your reading with prayer and adopt an attitude of openness to be guided by God's Spirit, and a willingness to follow whatever new light God will reveal to you.

Recognize, too, that a correct understanding of troubling issues may take time--time for research, and time to reflect on research. If the issue is unsettling, don't forsake your belief while you are trying to get the facts together. Scripture's counsel is sound: "Believe His prophets, and you shall prosper" (2 Chron 20:20).

2. Pay Attention to the Historical Context

Some of the misunderstandings that often arise with respect to the writings of Ellen White have to do with individuals who take her statements out of their historical context and misapply them. One example will illustrate this point.

In 1894, Mrs. White wrote against "a bicycle craze" in Battle Creek in which "money was spent to gratify an enthusiasm in this direction that might better, far better, have been invested in building houses of worship where they are greatly needed." She considered the bicycle craze as "idolatry" and a "bewitching influence" brought upon the people by Satan. Elsewhere, she warned that "money expended in bicycles and dress and other needless things must be accounted for" (Testimonies for the Church, 8:51; Testimonies to Ministers, p. 398).

If placed within today's context, the above counsel may seem odd, even ridiculous. Does this statement suggest that today we cannot buy bicycles for ourselves and our children? No. The context of those statements suggests that Mrs. White was addressing a specific situation at that time in which church members were "gratifying" their inclinations in their spending of money--God's money.

In fact, one issue of Reader's Digest captured the spirit pervasive at that time when it noted that at the beginning of the twentieth century, "the American people were swept with a consuming passion which left them with little time or money for anything else. . . . What was this big, new distraction? For an answer the merchants had only to look out the window and watch their erstwhile customers go whizzing by. America had discovered the bicycle, and everybody was making the most of the new freedom it brought. . . . The bicycle began as a rich man's toy.... The early bicycle cost $150, an investment comparable to the cost of an automobile today. . . . Every member of the family wanted a `wheel,' and entire family savings often were used up in supplying the demand."[7]

While the context of Ellen White's own statement explains what she was dealing with in the "bicycle craze," the above historical background helps us better to appreciate her counsel at that time. Her concern was for the wise and balanced expenditure of God's resources at a time of great need in God's work (cf. Haggai 1). She warned against those who were "selfishly pleasing their own imagination and gratifying their own desires" (Testimonies for the Church, 8:51). If she were alive today, Mrs. White might well direct her counsel to those of us who spend money on luxury items, automobiles, homes, sports equipment, electronic gadgets, or unneeded clothing. And yes, there still are very expensive bicycles!

3. Avoid Misleading "Proof-Texting"

There is always a danger for us to take her writings out of their immediate literary contexts, illegitimately stringing together some Spirit of Prophecy quotations, and making her statements mean something completely different from what they originally asserted. While certain offshoot groups are most guilty of compiling statements along these lines, the tendency is never far away from any of us.
In 1906 Mrs. White expressed concerns about this kind of proof text treatment of her works: "Those who are not walking in the light of the message may gather up statements from my writings that happen to please them, and that agree with their human judgment, and by separating these statements from their connection and placing them beside human reasonings, make it appear that my writings uphold that which they condemn" (Letter 208, 1906, in Manuscript Release #760, "The Integrity of the Sanctuary Truth" [a document available from the Ellen G. White Estate], p. 28).

There is nothing inherently wrong with finding and citing proof texts. As I explained in my earlier work *Receiving the Word* (pp. 28-30), a proof text is a verse or a longer passage used to establish a point. If the passage in its context supports the point, using it as proof is legitimate. In Bible studies, in religious articles and books, in sermons, and in conversations and discussions, we may quote key Scriptures which bear on the topic at hand without having to quote the whole chapter or passage, as long as a fair reading of the larger passage would support the point.

When we refer to "proof-texting" or a "proof-text method," however, we usually mean using an isolated text arbitrarily to prove one's own point, without regard to whether the text in its own setting would support that point at all. Such an approach can lead to misguided conclusions.

You may recall the story of a man who adopted such a method in seeking the will of God for a major decision of his life. Unwilling to engage in the painstaking effort of studying the Bible in its historical and grammatical context as the basis for drawing valid applications for his situation, he decided to close his eyes, open his Bible at random, prayerfully put his finger down, and get guidance from whatever verse his finger landed on. His first try came up with the text which says that Judas "went and hanged himself" (Mt 27:5). Finding these words unhelpful, he tried again and this time got "Go, and do thou likewise" (Lk 10:37). In desperation he tried one more time; the text he found was, "That thou doest, do quickly" (Jn 13:27).

This story may not be true, but it aptly illustrates the dangers inherent in the arbitrary proof-text method. Instead of considering seriously the context of a given passage, the interpreter simply chooses several key phrases that coincide with his concerns and builds a doctrine completely different from what the verses meant in their settings. Mrs. White reacted against this tendency in relation to her own writings:

"I know that many men take the testimonies the Lord has given, and apply them as they suppose they should be applied, picking out a sentence here and there, taking it from its proper connection, and applying it according to their idea. Thus poor souls become bewildered, when could they read in order all that has been given, they would see the true application, and would not become confused. Much that purports to be a message from Sister White, serves the purpose of misrepresenting Sister White, making her testify in favor of things that are not in accordance with her mind or judgment" (*Selected Messages*, 1:44).

Beware of accepting someone's private compilation from Mrs. White's writings, which may reflect that person's own biases rather than Mrs. White's position. As Mrs. White said about rumors concerning her teachings, so we might say about unauthorized proof-texting: "If you desire to know what the Lord has revealed through her [Ellen G. White], read her published works" (*Testimonies for the Church*, 5:696).

**4. Allow Her Writings to Interpret Themselves**

While much of her writing is plain and requires no special hermeneutic to understand, a few things may appear difficult to understand. Often, these have to do with specific instructions
in her letters to individuals or her testimonies and counsels to the church. In many cases, we don't know the entire background of the situation. Reading her letters or counsels in such situations is like listening to one end of a telephone conversation: we get an idea of what the parties are talking about, but it is not always possible to get the full picture. What should we do in such instances?

Mrs. White told us the solution: "The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture is explained by scripture" (Selected Messages, 1:42). In other words, if you are not sure about a particular issue in a particular place, check other places in her works for additional insight. This is what we normally do when we run into problems in the Bible--we study Scripture "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little" (cf. Is 28:10). In the same way, if questions arise in our reading of a particular counsel or letter, it may be wise for us to read her detailed treatment of that subject in her general works. We must allow Ellen White's own writings to interpret themselves.

5. Learn to Discern the Underlying Principles

Mrs. White's messages were often directed to people in particular situations. While the situations may be different from our own, we must carefully discern the underlying principles that may be applicable to us.

For example, at a time when many Americans still lived on farms, Ellen White suggested that a school curriculum for girls should include harnessing and driving horses. She wrote: "if girls . . . could learn to harness and drive a horse, and to use the saw and the hammer, as well as the rake and the hoe, they would be better fitted to meet the emergencies of life" (Education, pp. 216, 217).

The underlying principle in the above counsel is that girls should be "fitted to meet the emergencies of life." Indeed, the context of the statement shows that Mrs. White called for both sexes to be trained to be useful in homemaking. For the boys, she counseled: "To make a bed and put a room in order, to wash dishes, to prepare a meal, to wash and repair his own clothing, is a training that need not make any boy less manly." And the girls were also to learn how to "harness and drive a horse," not leaving such things for boys only.

Today, one way to apply the principle of how to be "fitted to meet the emergencies of life" would be for girls as well as boys in high school or college to take courses in auto mechanics and driver's education. But Mrs. White's concern was for more than emergencies, as her instruction for the boys shows. She wanted people to be fitted for the practical duties of life so that they need not be helpless when faced with the demands of everyday living, and so that they can help to lighten the burdens of others in the home. These underlying principles help us apply the counsel to situations which may differ from the one which prompted it.

6. Be Sure Conclusions Don’t Pit Ellen White Against Scripture

If in our study we draw some conclusions from Mrs. White's writings which make her appear to contradict Scripture, then either our understanding of the Bible or of Ellen G. White is not correct. Because she was a true prophet, inspired by the same Spirit as the biblical writers, her teachings will always be in harmony with the Scriptures.

We can illustrate this principle by considering Ellen White's strong counsels against using flesh meats. In many places, she stirringly urged a return to a vegetarian diet, man's original diet in the Garden of Eden. For example, she wrote: "Vegetables, fruits, and grains should compose our diet. Not an ounce of flesh meat should enter our stomachs. The eating of flesh is unnatural. We are to return to God's original purpose in the creation of man" (Counsels on Diet and Foods, p. 380).

In 1890, she wrote: "Among those who are waiting for the coming of the Lord, meat eating will eventually be done away; flesh will cease to form a part of their diet. We should ever
We must study to find counsel for our own lives, not to prove our conclusions or use the knowledge gained as a whip or a club to knock people on the head. A wrong spirit often clouds our perceptions of truth. And even a valid interpretation may be twisted, misunderstood, or misapplied if a person cherishes an unchristlike spirit.

During the 1888 General Conference debate on righteousness by ADVENTISTS AFFIRM : Understanding the Spirit of Prophecy: Some K... http://www.adventistsaffirm.org/article/62/previous-issues/v olume-14-n... 12 of 14 8/16/2012 9:29 A

Now, because the Bible says that one may eat of the meats designated clean (Lev 11, Deut 14), the Passover included eating a lamb (Ex 12), and Jesus apparently ate fish after His resurrection (Jn 21), shall we conclude that Mrs. White contradicted Scripture on this point? No, taking such a position would show that we had not examined her writings thoroughly enough.

While Ellen White strongly advocated not using flesh food, she did not teach that eating meat was wrong under all circumstances. She urged that people obtain the best diet they can. "In countries where there are fruits, grains, and nuts in abundance," she wrote, "flesh food is not the right food for God's people" (Testimonies for the Church, 9:159). For her, church members should "avoid meat eating, not because it is regarded as sin to eat meat, but because it is not healthful" (Manuscript Releases, 5:401, emphasis mine).

Health was her overriding concern here, made more acute by a change in the condition of animals. Flesh meat, according to Sister White, was never man's best food, and "its use is now doubly objectionable, since disease in animals is so rapidly increasing" (The Ministry of Healing, p. 313). She stated: "Animals are becoming more and more diseased, and it will not be long until animal food will be discarded by many besides Seventh-day Adventists. Foods that are healthful and life sustaining are to be prepared, so that men and women will not need to eat meat" (Testimonies for the Church, 7:124). Today's concern over mad cow and foot and mouth diseases, together with increasing evidence of the advantages of a vegetarian diet over meat products, offer compelling support for Ellen White's counsel.

So Ellen White does not contradict Scripture on this point. Rather, her counsel accords with the Bible's admonition to care for the body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20). For Ellen G. White, following health principles means avoiding all practices that are harmful to the body and using judiciously the things which are healthful. It also involves walking in the advancing light that God has given to meet the special conditions prevailing in the end times. She sums up her position thus:

"While we do not make the use of flesh meat a test, while we do not want to force any one to give up its use, yet it is our duty to request that no minister of the conference shall make light of or oppose the message of reform on this point. . . . If we could be benefited by indulging the desire for flesh foods, I would not make this appeal to you; but I know we cannot. Flesh foods are injurious to the physical well-being, and we should learn to do without them. Those who are in a position where it is possible to secure a vegetarian diet, but who choose to follow their own preferences in this matter, eating and drinking as they please, will gradually grow careless of the instruction the Lord has given regarding other phases of the present truth, and will lose their perception of what is truth; they will surely reap as they have sown" (Counsels on Diet and Foods, pp. 401-403).

7. Study for Personal Edification

Another principle that will enable us to understand and benefit from Mrs. White's writings is that we must study to find counsel for our own lives, not to prove our conclusions or use the knowledge gained as a whip or a club to knock people on the head. A wrong spirit often clouds our perceptions of truth. And even a valid interpretation may be twisted, misunderstood, or misapplied if a person cherishes an unchristlike spirit.
faith, Mrs. White made a comment that reveals how the critical or antagonistic spirit of an interpreter can affect the interpretation. She wrote to certain individuals: "I am afraid of your interpretation of any Scripture which has revealed itself in such an unchristlike spirit as you have manifested. . . . I am afraid of any application of Scripture that needs such a spirit and bears such fruit as you have manifested" (Letter 83, 1890, in Manuscript Releases, 9:330).

Thus, if we desire to understand Sister White's writings correctly, we must always approach our study with a humble, teachable, and Christlike spirit. Our goal must be to discover the will of God for our lives so we can faithfully put it into practice.

**Conclusion**

The best way to summarize the principles for interpreting the Spirit of Prophecy is to quote Mrs. White's counsel on how to understand the Bible. The same principles apply to her own writings since both works are inspired by the same Spirit:

"As our physical life is sustained by food, so our spiritual life is sustained by the word of God. And every soul is to receive life from God's word for himself. As we must eat for ourselves in order to receive nourishment, so we must receive the word for ourselves. We are not to obtain it merely through the medium of another's mind. We should carefully study the Bible, asking God for the aid of the Holy Spirit, that we may understand His word. We should take one verse, and concentrate the mind on the task of ascertaining the thought which God has put in that verse for us. We should dwell upon the thought until it becomes our own, and we know 'what saith the Lord'" (The Desire of Ages, p. 390).

A correct approach to both the Bible (the "greater light") and the Spirit of Prophecy (the "lesser light") requires that we take the following steps outlined in the above statement:

1. Make a commitment to study God's inspired messages carefully and broadly;
2. Pray for the Holy Spirit's enlightenment for correct understanding;
3. Choose a verse (or a small section) at a time;
4. Concentrate the thought (i.e., prayerfully reflect or meditate) on God's message;
5. Find out what the passage means to you in your concrete situation;
6. Having discovered "what saith the Lord," put it into practice--obey!

**Notes**


3. See, for example, Roger L. Dudley and Des Cummings, Jr., "A Comparison of the Christian Attitudes and Behaviors Between Those Adventist Church Members Who
Regularly Read Ellen White Books and Those Who Do Not," Andrews University Institute of Church Ministry, 1982. See especially the Conclusions on pp. 41, 42.

4. See my Must We Be Silent?: Issues Dividing Our Church (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Berean Books, 2001), available at many Adventist Book Centers or from Berean Books, P. O. Box 2799, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. Or send email to pipim@compuserve.com.


6. See, for example, Must We Be Silent?, pp. 238-244; 251-266; 353-402; 458-462. Readers will also want to refer to the eye-opening book Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventists Affirm, 2000), a work that compellingly documents the distortion of Ellen White's position on key issues in the women's ordination debate.


8. Background information on some of Ellen White's statements can also be useful. I have personally found the following books helpful: My Dear Brother M, by Paul A. Gordon (gives some background to some of the testimonies and letters of EGW); Great Visions of Ellen White, by Roger W. Coon; Messenger of the Lord, by Herbert E. Douglass (deals with questions often raised by critics and more). There is also the CD-ROM which makes all of Mrs. White's published works accessible at the stroke of a computer key.

9. One careful scholar of Ellen White's writings has summarized the basic principles of health reform that Ellen White believed and practiced: "(1) Do the best one can under circumstances that may be beyond one's control; (2) Avoid everything hurtful, such as alcohol, tobacco, and drugs; (3) Use judiciously that which is healthful--use self-control; (4) Do not mark out any precise line in diet that everyone must follow, because not everyone has the same physical needs or opportunities to find the best food; (5) Follow health practices to improve one's mind for spiritual purposes, not to earn God's acceptance (legalism); and (6) Reason from cause to effect" (Douglass, Messenger of the Lord, p. 400).

Additional links on this topic:

Prove All Things: A Response to WOMEN IN MINISTRY
Looking Ahead Through the Prophet's Eyes

by Hedwig Jemison

Are we seeing the fulfillment of predictions made long ago? What does the future hold?

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19).

Peter and his two companions were present with Christ at the transfiguration and saw their Lord in all His majestic glory. This was strong evidence that could never be removed from their minds, evidence they would often recount.

Yet, Peter declared as he once told this story, there is something stronger than the evidences of our senses of hearing and seeing, and that is the more sure word of prophecy. The New English Bible puts it this way: "In the message of the prophets we have something still more certain."

The apostles were firmly convinced of the mission of Christ. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they built up the early church. "Faithfully and wisely they labored, testifying of the things they had seen and heard, and appealing to a more sure word of prophecy" (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 165; see also p. 534).

And these are the resources of the church today in the fulfillment of its mission—the same mission. Personal experience is important. Men and women may testify as to what they have seen, heard, and felt, but strength and safety lie in "the sure word of prophecy." This we find in God's Word as imparted to mankind in times of old and in the promised gift of the Spirit of prophecy to the remnant church called to warn and enlighten the world as it sinks into darkness. This gift provides eyes for the church in end time.

The amazing, unique ministry of Ellen White continues to bless the world and its inhabitants nearly a century after her death. Through the eyes of her gift she opened up tomorrow to the inhabitants of the world. The success of her work can be summed up in her own words:

"At times I am carried far ahead into the future and shown what is to take place. Then again I
am shown things as they have occurred in the past" (Spiritual Gifts, 2:292).

In vision Ellen White was shown in detail how the great controversy between Christ and Satan would come to its climax, how Satan, knowing he had but a short time, would be relentless in his fury to deceive and to ruin God’s people.

The conflict is raging in our times, engulfing the whole world. Satan is zeroing in on individuals, churches, cities and nations. In a last desperate effort he is trying to wrench the world and its inhabitants from Christ and plunge them into eternal destruction. And these final events are made meaningful to us through the "sure word of prophecy" for these last days.

Let us recall what took place in 1844. Students of Bible prophecy heralded the special message that God was bringing the world to a cataclysmic end. God wanted the people on planet Earth to know how they should relate themselves to the events of 1844. He first chose William Foy, a young man studying for the ministry. Foy responded to God's commission to tell others what had been revealed in the visions. But the third vision seemed incomprehensible to him, and this led him to confusion. Though he did not publicly proclaim his third vision, he did continue as a preacher for the Freewill Baptists. Then God called Hazen Foss, a young man of talent, and told him that He had a message for the end time and had chosen him to give it. But unlike Foy, Foss refused to tell the vision. He feared the ridicule and the skepticism he would have to meet and failed to fulfill his role as God's messenger.

God then turned to "the weakest of the weak."

Ellen Harmon was an attractive young girl who enjoyed school and loved her classmates. One day an angry child threw a stone which hit Ellen in the face, injuring and disfiguring her. She was in a coma for three weeks and afterward found it impossible to continue her education. Her hand shook when she tried to write and she fainted when she attempted to study. This was a great disappointment to her. Of this experience she wrote later:

"I know the light I received came from God, it was not taught me by man. I knew not how to write so that others could read it till God gave me my visions. I went to school but very little on account of my health. . . . Sickness would cause me to take [to] my bed for weeks and sometimes for months" (Manuscript Releases, 5:98).

Her illness and misfortune made her very sensitive to the taunts of her former friends. Her playmates shied away from her because of her facial disfigurement. In her loneliness she turned to Christ and found in Him the comfort and companionship for which her sensitive soul longed. She became an avid student of the Bible.

When God came to Ellen Harmon at 17 and told her that He had a message for the end time and wanted her to give that message to the people, her sensitive nature caused her to shrink from this tremendous responsibility.

Carefully she counted the cost of prejudice, ridicule, and misunderstanding, and then in faith she claimed God's promises that He would be with her.

The night Ellen told her first vision in Poland, Maine, early in 1845, Hazen Foss overheard her. He recognized her account as a description of what had been shown to him. When he met her the next morning, he encouraged her to give the messages faithfully: "Do not refuse to obey God, for it will be at the peril of your soul. I am a lost man."

The messages God gave Ellen White presented to her in about 2,000 visions and prophetic dreams which formed the basis for some 120 books now in print were to bring guidance, hope, courage, and eternal life to those who read and accepted them.
Visions Help Us Understand Last Day Events

People are observing the intensity that has taken possession of practically all earthly elements, conscious that something great and decisive is about to take place. The hearts of men and women are troubling them greatly because they cannot explain what is happening. Looking ahead, Ellen White wrote:

"The world is on the verge of a stupendous crisis" (Prophets and Kings, p. 537). "The whole world appears to be in the march to death" (Evangelism, p. 26). "The time is at hand when there will be sorrow in the world that no human balm can heal. The Spirit of God is being withdrawn. Disasters by sea and by land follow one another in quick succession" (Prophets and Kings, p. 277).

Disasters.

Recently I saw a tallying of natural disasters for the year 2000. "Insurance companies put global loss this year at $30 billion--the most costly disaster year in history. $7.5 billion was covered by insurance, $22.5 billion is outright loss. The worst disaster of the year was flooding in Mozambique in February. 500,000 people were left homeless." Through the sure word of prophecy we know what these disasters mean. Ellen White told us that they are among God's "agencies by which He seeks to arouse men and women to a sense of their danger" (Prophets and Kings, p. 277).

She observed, "In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous" (The Great Controversy, pp. 589, 590).

Movements in Christendom.

She further predicted, "Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome." "The line of distinction between professed Christians and the ungodly is now hardly distinguishable. Church members love what the world loves and are ready to join with them, and Satan determines to unite them in one body and thus strengthen his cause by sweeping all into the ranks of spiritualism" (The Great Controversy, p. 588).

The Broad Scope of the Writings

In Early Writings, p. 155, Ellen White stated that "John came in the spirit and power of Elijah to proclaim the first advent of Jesus," and then she declared, "I was pointed down to the last days and saw that John represented those who should go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah to herald the day of wrath and the second advent of Jesus." But John wrought no miracle.

The Seventh-day Adventist church represents the Elijah message of the last days. It is the church's task to help people understand the Bible and prepare them for the second coming of Christ, not to distract with miracles. There are miracles among us--and we believe in miracles--but as a people we are not noted at this time for "great signs and wonders." Rather, in vision, Ellen White saw thousands going from house to house explaining the Word of God and pointing people to Christ and His second coming. We are witnessing the fulfillment of this through Global Missions and other Bible-centered outreaches today.

Diversion.
In the setting of an ecstatic speaking in tongues Ellen White wrote about "those who will treat as something of great importance these peculiar manifestations, which are not of God, but which are calculated to divert the minds of many away from the teachings of the Word" (*Selected Messages*, 2:41, emphasis supplied).

Note the fruitage of such experiences diverting minds from the teachings of the Word. And she warned:

"We cannot afford to sanction anything that would bring in confusion and weaken our zeal in regard to the great work that God has given us to do in the world to prepare for the second coming of Christ" (*Selected Messages*, 2:42, emphasis supplied).

Paul said, "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (1 Cor 14:19).

When a couple from Ohio came to Ellen White and offered to exhibit their ecstatic experience for her approval, she replied, "I have been instructed that when one offers to exhibit these peculiar manifestations, this is a decided evidence that it is not the work of God" (*Selected Messages*, 2:42).

**Guidelines.**

Note some of the guidelines God has given us for these last days:

1. "The Holy Spirit . . . always comes . . . in a way that commends itself to the judgment of the people. In our speaking, our singing, and in all our spiritual exercises, we are to reveal that calmness and dignity and godly fear that actuates every true child of God" (ibid., p. 43).

2. "Impressions and feelings are no sure evidence that a person is led by the Lord. Satan will, if he is unsuspected, give feelings and impressions. These are not safe guides" (*Testimonies for the Church*, 1:413).

3. "The Lord requires His people to use their reason, and not lay it aside for impressions. His work will be intelligible to all His children. His teaching will be such as will commend itself to the understanding of intelligent minds. It is calculated to elevate the mind" (ibid., p. 230).

4. "The most profitable meetings for spiritual advancement are those which are characterized with solemnity and deep searching of heart; each seeking to know himself, andearnestly, and in deep humility, seeking to learn of Christ" (ibid., p. 412).

5. "Some rejoice and exult that they have the gifts, which others have not. May God deliver His people from such gifts. What do these gifts do for them?" (ibid., pp. 418, 419).

6. "We must be very careful to guard against everything that savors of fanaticism and disorder. We must guard against all peculiar exercises that would be likely to stir up the mind of unbelievers, and lead them to think that as a people we are led by impulse, and delight in noise and confusion accompanied by eccentricities of action" (*Selected Messages*, 2:41).

7. "Let God's people act so that the world will see that Seventh-day Adventists are an intelligent, thinking people, whose faith is based on a surer foundation than the bedlam of confusion" (ibid., p. 24).

Today the "gift of tongues" is gathering people of all religions and beliefs--Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Spiritualists, cultists--under one mighty umbrella. The only criterion for "belonging" is to be able to "speak in tongues." It is an ecumenical movement without precedent.

**Healings.**

Often linked with tongues are healings. A convert to the movement wrote:
Ellen White wrote of "When Ken prayed for me, he prayed in a beautiful language I had never heard before. You might have intellectual arguments against the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, but when somebody prays for you in tongues and heals you, what is there left to argue about? That was the first time I had heard someone manifesting a new language."

Soon after this person was healed he began speaking in tongues. How direct and timely is the caution:

"Some will be tempted to receive these wonders as from God. The sick will be healed before us. Miracles will be performed in our sight. Are we prepared for the trial which awaits us when the lying wonders of Satan shall be more fully exhibited? Will not many souls be ensnared and taken? By departing from the plain precepts and commandments of God, and giving heed to fables, the minds of many are preparing to receive these lying wonders. We must all now seek to arm ourselves for the contest in which we must soon engage. Faith in God's Word, prayerfully studied and practically applied, will be our shield from Satan's power and will bring us off conquerors through the blood of Christ" (Testimonies for the Church, 1:302).

We must always remember the inspired counsel: "Every statement and every miracle must be tested" "by the Holy Scriptures" (The Great Controversy, p. 593). Ellen White also stated, "The man who makes the working of miracles the test of his faith will find that Satan can, through a species of deceptions, perform wonders that will appear to be genuine miracles" (Selected Messages, 2:52).

Her thought-provoking warning is: "Those who do not accept the Word of God just as it reads, will be snared in his [Satan's] trap" (ibid.) But she offered this comforting admonition: "You must learn the simple art of taking God at His word; then you have solid ground beneath your feet" (My Life Today, p. 10).

**Rock Music, Drugs and Satan Worship**

Cam was a very articulate young man, reared in an Adventist home. But for some time he was committed to rock music and drugs. Then he came face to face with Satan and it seemed that Satan was going to destroy him. During this experience he felt the tug of the Holy Spirit's power. He awakened his parents early one morning to tell them of the subtly deceiving LSD trip he had been through. That morning, through earnest prayer and Bible study, this young man found Christ as his personal Savior. He now wants people to realize that "rock groups turn kids on to drugs, and under the influence of drugs, rock music leaves an open channel for the working of Satan on the mind and body." Many young people are turning to drugs, alcohol, sexual promiscuity, rebellion, and the occult. "Eight out of ten songs," he told me, "promote in a subtle way these evils. Those who listen to such music are inviting Satan to work in their minds. Even rock 'n' roll as 'Christian rock' often leads its listeners into the charismatic movement and the Christian coalition, with its pro church-and-state agenda."

Through the prophetic utterances of God's messenger, Satan's schemes are unmasked. We read in Education, p. 167, that "Music is often perverted to serve purposes of evil, and it thus becomes one of the most alluring agencies of temptation."

"Association with worldliness in musical lines is looked upon as harmless by some Sabbathkeepers," Mrs. White wrote in 1900. "But such ones are on dangerous ground. Thus Satan seeks to lead men and women astray, and thus he has gained control of souls. So smooth, so plausible is the working of the enemy that his wiles are not suspected" (Selected Messages, 3:332). "Music, when not abused, is a great blessing; but when put to a wrong use, it is a terrible curse. . . Satan is leading the young captive. Oh, what can I say to lead them to break his power of infatuation! He is a skillful charmer, luring them on to perdition" (Testimonies for the Church, 1:497).

**Dangers Today.**
Cam is greatly concerned about the music many young people of our church are listening to and singing, even in our religious services. As to the secular music, many do not seem to realize what the words mean and to what end they lead. "Some songs have language so vulgar," he insisted, "that one wouldn't dare to read it in a mixed group, yet the young people everywhere are singing these songs and do not know what they are singing. Some songs cannot really be fully understood until a person is under the influence of drugs." He stated that "rock music today is progressing into deeper and heavier portrayals of grosser sins with unbelievable rapidity."

One rock group a number of years ago claimed to have made an album in a noon break at their studio and cut it before it was three hours old after they had worked themselves into a frenzy in a most "frantic session." Cam explained to me that it is impossible to make a recording of such perfection in just three hours. This could only be done through Satan's influence. Many such rock groups have nearly instantaneous success, when all they produce is loud noise which one could scarcely call music. Cam feels that the only explanation for such success is that Satan is the leader of the groups.

Ellen White wrote of Satan's influence in religious services just before the close of probation:

"Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make right decisions. . . . This is an invention of Satan to cover up his ingenious methods for making of none effect the pure, sincere, elevating, ennobling, sanctifying truth for this time. . . . The powers of satanic agencies blend with the din and noise, to have a carnival, and this is termed the Holy Spirit's working" (Selected Messages, 2:36).

Could it be that these prophetic words describe the Christian rock music leading to experiences attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit?

**A Predicted Turning to Oriental Religions**

Young people whose minds have been distorted by the use of drugs and through these drugs have had mystical experiences often turn to Eastern cults and devil worship. As one writer puts it, "I have yet to find a Satan worshiper who did not first open his mind to mystical experiences through drugs. Devil worshipers are graduates of the school of psychedelia."

In explaining the art of meditation to an inquirer, a robed religious teacher (swami) in Calcutta stated, "We're sort of a 'spiritual United Nations,' seeking to unite all religions of the world through meditation."

Listen to what Ellen White saw would happen in the end time:

"With the imagination highly wrought, and voices musically tuned, they picture the broad road as one of happiness and glory. . . . Satan. . . . covers his hideous purposes, and succeeds too well in deluding the unwary who are not firmly anchored upon eternal truth" (Evangelism, p. 609).

**Pleasing Forms.**

"There are many who shrink with horror from the thought of consulting spirit mediums, but who are attracted by more pleasing forms of spiritism. Others are led astray. . . . by the mysticism of Theosophy and other Oriental religions" (Prophets and Kings, p. 210).

In our day a rising interest in astrology and psychic hotlines, new age movements, and channeling are the modern ways Satan is flattering his way to gain people's interest in his deceptions.
My friend Cam has served as a Bible instructor for 5½ years and welcomes opportunities to alert young people to the dangers of Satan's allurements. He is grateful for God's forgiving grace which has released him from this world of rock music and drugs. As he studied the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White, he exclaimed, "Ellen White is so far ahead of her times that many can't grasp it. It is about time we were catching up." He cites The Ministry of Healing, p. 503, showing that God's people "need an experience much higher, deeper, broader, than many have yet thought of having." With all our religious advantages, we ought to know far more than we do about this experience.

**Cities Becoming Like Sodom**

Many of our evangelists and leaders have given study to the challenge of the cities: New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Manila, Accra, Rio de Janeiro, and other cities of the world. City work in general has been researched to find ways to gain access to these citadels of sin. In 1909 the Holy Spirit moved God's servant to declare that in these cities, "The corruption that prevails is beyond the power of the human pen to describe" (Testimonies for the Church, 9:89).

She wrote, "The cities of today are fast becoming like Sodom and Gomorrah" (ibid.). Years ago a columnist for Newsweek wrote: "We're living in a Babylonian society more Babylonian than Babylon itself. . . . All codes have been broken down." The passage of time has made his statement all the more true.

**Hope for Cities.**

But there is also a message of hope! In spite of the gross wickedness of the cities, the Lord's messenger wrote:

"In every city, filled though it may be with violence and crime, there are many who with proper teaching may learn to become followers of Jesus. Thousands may thus be reached with saving truth and be led to receive Christ as a personal Saviour" (Prophets and Kings, p. 277).

In another statement she wrote, "The millions living in these congested centers are to hear the third angel's message" (Evangelism, p. 35). Praise God that through modern technology the word of God is circling the earth by radio and television, aiding the powerful witness of preaching and of personal work.

What a challenge!

**Glimpses of the Future**

And now for a few quick glimpses into the future through the eyes of the prophet. In The Great Controversy Ellen White predicted the advance of the message under the latter rain when God's people, with faces lighted up, "will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven" (p. 612).

Thousands will join in giving the warning. God's people will then work miracles. Satan too will work miracles, "even bringing down fire from heaven" (ibid.).

**Church and State.**

She saw trouble ahead for the United States as its government would "repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government." This traumatic experience was to follow the forming of a "threefold union" with Protestant America stretching its hand "over the abyss to clasp hands with spiritualism" and the papacy (Testimonies for the Church, 5:451).

She wrote of coming Sunday laws and the problems they will bring.
She wrote of coming Sunday laws and the problems they will bring, and then she gave the assurance that "the faithful servants of God need not fear the outcome of the conflict." (Review and Herald, Sept. 30, 1909). "It is God that shields His creatures and hedges them in from the power of the destroyer" (The Great Controversy, p. 589).

**Shaking.**

Another view given through the eyes of the prophet relates to the shaking that will come to the church—an experience in which "the church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall." Ellen White explained that the church remains, but "the sinners in Zion will be sifted out the chaff separated from the precious wheat" (Selected Messages, 2:380). This she declared will be "a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place." This glimpse of the future should lead every member to look well into his own soul.

But even in this terrible crisis the ranks of the church will not dwindle. "But there are men who will receive the truth, and these will take the places made vacant by those who become offended and leave the truth. . . . The Lord will work so that the disaffected ones will be separated from the true and loyal ones. . . . The ranks will not be diminished. Those who are firm and true will close up the vacancies that are made by those who become offended and apostatize" (ibid., 3:422).

In order for us to attain this experience she urged a personal study of the Bible as of paramount importance, the acceptance of Christ as a personal Savior, heeding the word of the prophets, and a responsible reaction to the counsels relayed through them.

**True Tongues.**

And through the prophetic word we learn of the great things that are to take place in the final warning when with power the "events of the day of Pentecost shall be repeated." Ellen White wrote, not of speaking in unknown tongues, but of the genuine gift of known languages by which the message will be shared:

"Then, as at the Pentecostal season, the people will hear the truth spoken to them, every man in his own tongue. . . . Thousands of voices will be imbued with the power to speak forth the wonderful truths of God's Word. The stammering tongue will be unloosed, and the timid will be made strong to bear courageous testimony to the truth" (Review and Herald, July 20, 1886).

"The work of conquering evil is to be done through faith," she wrote. "Those who go into the battlefield will find that they must put on the whole armor of God. The shield of faith will be their defense and will enable them to be more than conquerors. Nothing else will avail but this faith in the Lord of Hosts, and obedience to His orders. Vast armies furnished with every other facility will avail nothing in the last great conflict. Without faith, an angel host could not help. Living faith alone will make them invincible and enable them to stand in the evil day, steadfast, unmoving, holding the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end" (Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, pp. 182, 183).

Let us give heed to God's "sure word of prophecy" and know that "victories are . . . gained . . . by simple obedience to the highest General, the Lord God of heaven. He who trusts in this Leader will never know defeat" (Testimonies for the Church, 6:140).

**Notes**


We are impressed that this will be an important time among us as a people. It should be a period of earnestly seeking the Lord and humbling your hearts before Him. I hope you will regard this as a most precious opportunity to pray and counsel together; and if the injunction of the apostle to esteem others better than ourselves is carefully heeded, you can in humility of mind, with the spirit of Christ, search the Scriptures carefully to see what is truth. The truth can lose nothing by close investigation. Let the word of God speak for itself; let it be its own interpreter, and the truth will shine like precious gems amid the rubbish.

It has been shown me that there are many of our people who take things for granted, and know not for themselves, by close, critical study of the Scriptures, whether they are believing truth or error. If our people depended much less upon preaching, and spent far more time on their knees before God, pleading for Him to open their understanding to the truth of His word, that they might have a knowledge for themselves that their feet were standing on solid rock, angels of God would be around about them, to help them in their endeavors.

Laziness?

There is a most wonderful laziness indulged in by a large class of our people, who are willing others should search the Scriptures for them; and they take the truth from the lips of these as a positive fact, but they do not know it to be Bible truth, through their own individual research, and by the deep convictions of the Spirit of God upon their hearts and minds. Let every soul now be divested of envy, of jealousy, of evil surmising, and bring his heart into close connection with God. If all do this, they will have that love burning upon the altar of their hearts which Christ evinced for them. All parties will have Christian kindness and Christian tenderness. There will be no strife, for the servants of God must not strive. There will be no party [partisan] spirit; there will be no selfish ambition.

Our people individually must understand Bible truth more thoroughly, for they certainly will be called before councils; they will be criticised by keen and critical minds. It is one thing to
give assent to the truth, and another thing, through close examination as Bible students, to know what is truth. We have been apprised of our dangers, of the trials and temptations just before us; and now is the time to take special pains to prepare ourselves to meet the temptations and emergencies which are just before us.

If souls neglect to bring the truth into their lives, and be sanctified through the truth, that they may be able to give a reason of the hope that is within them, with meekness and fear, they will be swept away by some of the manifold errors and heresies, and will lose their souls. I beg of you, my brethren, for Christ's sake, to have no selfish ambitions.

**Study with Prayer.**

As you shall assemble together at these general meetings for prayer, I beseech of you to make personal efforts to cleanse soul and spirit from every defiling influence which would separate you from God. Many, many will be lost because they have not studied their Bibles upon their knees, with earnest prayer to God that the entrance of the word of God might give light to their understanding. All selfish ambition should be laid aside, and you should plead with God for his Spirit to descend upon you as it came upon the disciples who were assembled together upon the day of Pentecost. "They were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Let every heart be subdued before God. Let there be a taking hold by living faith for victory over ourselves, victory over Satan.

If all who claim to believe the Bible did believe it as the oracles of God, as actually a divine communication teaching every soul what to do in order to be saved, what a different effect would follow their labors. It is because so many who handled the word of God in opening the Scriptures to others are not diligent students of the Scriptures or doers of the word themselves, that they make so little advancement in growth of grace and in coming to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. They take largely the interpretation of the Scriptures from others' lips, but do not put their minds to the tax of searching the evidences for themselves, to know what is truth.

**Encourage Unity.**

All misunderstandings and controversies may be happily and successfully adjusted by the living testimonies of the word of God. One of the greatest hindrances to our spiritual success is the great want of love and respect evidenced for one another. We should seek most earnestly, by every word and action, to answer the prayer of Christ, and to encourage that unity which is expressed in the prayer of Christ, that we may be one as He is one with the Father. Every feeling of indifference for one another should be strenuously overcome, and everything that would tend to variance with brethren should be put away from us. The love of Jesus Christ existing in the heart will consume these little things, or greater things, which tend to divide hearts.

Satan sees that in unity there is strength; that in variance and disunion there is weakness. Heaven's enlightenment is what is needed, so that when we look upon the faces of our brethren, we may consider: "These are they that have been purchased by the price of the blood of Christ. They are precious in his sight. I must love them as Christ has loved me. These are my fellow-laborers in the harvest field. I must be perfectly united with them; I must speak only words that will tend to encourage and advance them in their forward movement."

My brethren, you are Christ's soldiers, making aggressive warfare against Satan and his host; but it is grievous to the Spirit of God for you to be surmising evil of one another, and letting the imagination of your hearts be controlled by the power of the great accuser, whose business it is to accuse them before God day and night. Satan has his soldiers trained for the special work of breaking up the union which Christ made so great a sacrifice to establish between brethren.
No Party Spirit.

We are to be bound to one another in sacred bonds of holy union. But it is the work of the enemy to create a party [partisan] spirit, and to have party feelings, and some feel that they are doing the work of God in strengthening prejudices and jealousies among brethren. God would have a sacred order to exist among his co-workers, that they may be bound together by Christ in the Lord God of Israel. We are to be faithful, frank, and true to the interests of each other. We are constantly to be listening for orders from our Captain, but not be guilty of listening to reports against our brethren, or imagining evil of our brethren. Our interests must be bound up with our brethren's, and it is decidedly nothing but the work of the Devil to create suspicion and jealousies between each other. We are working for the same cause and under the same Master. It is one work the preparation of the people of God in these last days.

Guard Reputation.

The prosperity and reputation of our brethren are to be zealously guarded, as we would have our own honor and reputation preserved. Everything like evil-speaking, every word that savors of sarcasm, every influence that would demerit our brethren or any branch of the work of God, are all working away from the prayer of Christ. Satan is at work in this matter, that the prayer of Christ may not be answered, and he has helpers in the very men who claim to be doing the work of God. Everything that is said to create suspicion, or to cast a slur, or to demerit those engaged in appointed agencies, is working on Satan's side of the question. It brings only weakness to our own souls, and is a great hindrance to the advancement of the work of God. For years it has been shown me that everything of this character was grievous to the Spirit of God, and was giving the enemies of our faith great advantage to take misconceptions of the truth that God's laborers were seeking to advance. Some who think that they are really doing the Lord's work are traitors in the cause. Envy is more common than we imagine, and prejudice is encouraged, and becomes strong by indulgence, in the hearts of those who should discern its baleful influence and spurn it from the soul-temple. Jealousy is as cruel as the grave, but Satan makes this a masterly temptation, not only to estrange friends, but brethren.

Examine Feelings.

It is high time that every soul intrusted with responsibilities should examine his own heart diligently by the lighted candle of God's word, to see whether he is indeed in the faith and in the love of the truth. The spirit of love for one another, as Christ has evidenced for us, will lead us to examine closely every impulse, every sentiment and feeling indulged, in the light of the law of God, that the heart may be opened to conviction whether or not we are keeping the principles of that holy law. It is a positive duty, which God enjoins upon souls, to bring our will and spirit under the control of the divine influence of the Spirit of God. When we do this, we shall rise above all these cheap and unconsecrated feelings, and every victory that is gained by our brethren we shall be just as glad to see as if it were gained by ourselves.

Brethren, when we are doers of the word and not hearers only, we shall think much less of self, and esteem others better than ourselves. The greatest curse among our people today is seeking for the highest place. Full of self-importance and self-esteem, we do not feel our need of the constant grace of Christ to work with all our efforts. Whatever you are in character, in purity, in persevering energy, in devoted piety, will give you position and will make others appreciate you.

Study Honestly.

We should now closely examine the oracles of God. The garments of self-righteousness are to be laid aside. Let the word of God which you take in your hands be studied with simplicity. Cherish reverence for it, and study it with honesty of purpose. We are not to set our stakes, and then to interpret everything to reach this set point. Here is where some of our great reformers have failed, and this is the reason that men who today might be mighty champions for God and the truth are warring against the truth. Let every thought, every word, and the
deportment savor of that courtesy and Christian politeness toward each other which the Scriptures enjoin. God designs we should be learners, first, from the living oracles, and secondly, from our fellow-men. This is God's order.

**Study Reverently.**

The word of God is the great detector of error; to it we believe everything must be brought. The Bible must be our standard for every doctrine. We must study it reverentially. We are to receive no one's opinion without comparing it with the Scriptures. Here is divine authority which is supreme in matters of faith. It is the word of the living God that is to decide all controversies. It is when men mingle their own human smartness with God's words of truth in giving sharp thrusts to those who are in controversy with them, that they show that they have not a sacred reverence for God's inspired word. They mix the human with the divine, the common with the sacred, and they belittle God's word. We must in searching the Scriptures be filled with wisdom and power that is above the human, which will so soften and subdue our hard hearts that we will search the Scriptures as diligent students, and will receive the ingrafted word, that we may know the truth, that we may teach it to others as it is in Jesus.

**Live the Truth.**

The correct interpretation of the Scriptures is not all that God requires. He enjoins upon us that we should not only know the truth, but that we should practice the truth as it is in Jesus. We are to bring into our practice, into our association with our fellow-men, the Spirit of Him who gave us the truth. We must not only search for the truth as for hidden treasures, but it is a positive necessity, if we are laborers together with God, that we comply with the conditions laid down in His word, and bring the Spirit of Christ into our hearts, that our understanding may be strengthened, and we become apt teachers to make known to others the truth as it is revealed to us in His word. All frivolity, all jesting and joking, all commonness and cheapness of spirit, must be put away by the people of God. All pride, all envy, all evil surmisings and jealousies, must be overcome by the grace of Christ; and sobriety, humility, purity, and godliness must be encouraged and revealed in the life and character.

**One with Christ.**

We must eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God. This is in doing His word, in weaving into our lives and characters the spirit and works of Christ. Then we are one with Christ as Christ was one with the Father. Then we are partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. There is no assurance that our doctrine is right, and free from all chaff and error, unless we are daily doing the will of God. If we do His will, we shall know of the doctrine. We shall see the truth in its sacred beauty. We shall accept it with reverence and godly fear, and then we can present that which we know is truth to others. There should be no feeling of superiority or self-exaltation in this solemn work. The soul that is in love with God and His work will be as candid as the day.

*1888 Materials*, pp. 196-201