

a study of the deep things of the word. Pay particular attention to pages 707-709.

7. Imagine yourself as just beginning to teach a college Sabbath school class. Outline what you could tell the members about Bible study that would help them prepare to discuss the Sabbath school lesson intelligently.

## The Gift of Prophecy, I

The attitude of Seventh-day Adventists toward the Bible is stated succinctly in the first declaration in the "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists": "That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, contain an all-sufficient revelation of His will to men, and are the only unerring rule of faith and practice."

The Seventh-day Adventist Church also believes that God has through the ministry and writings of Ellen G. White provided the church with special guidance in the study of the Bible and the application of its principles to the present day. This belief has been expressed in article 19 of our "Fundamental Beliefs":

"That God has placed in His church the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. That these gifts operate in harmony with the divine principles of the Bible, and are given for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ. . . . That the gift of the spirit of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church. . . . They recognize that this gift was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White."

In the next three chapters we will give attention to (1) the Bible backgrounds describing the operation of the gift of prophecy, (2) the ways of testing the experience of persons professing to have the gift, and (3) how the messages given through the gift should be used. Some points concerning the inspiration of the Bible will be discussed in detail. This is essential if we are to understand the function of this modern manifestation of the gift of prophecy. This topic is included early in our consideration of the fundamentals of Christian faith so we may gain maximum help from the use of these special messages in our study.

### I. The Gift of Prophecy

It was the Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of Christ," who moved the ancient prophets to testify regarding the first and second advents of Christ. See:

1 Peter 1:10, 11

2 Peter 1:21

He gave them ability and authority to speak prophetically in Old and in New Testament times. See:

2 Chronicles 15:1, 2  
Ezekiel 2:2

1 Corinthians 12:8-11  
Ephesians 4:8, 11, 12

Consequently, we speak of the work of the Holy Spirit that made men inspired spokesmen for God as "the gift of prophecy." "Prophecy" must not be understood in the restricted sense of "prediction" only. The term applies to any message given through the prophets, whether it be instruction, reproof, or prediction, or of any other type.

Another expression closely related to "gift of prophecy" is used by the angel who spoke to John. He said: "I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Revelation 19:10. The testimony, or "the witness," of Jesus may be properly understood as either the testimony (or "witness") Christians bear regarding Christ or as the testimony coming from Christ to His people through the prophets. In Revelation 19:10 and 12:17 it seems clear that we should understand it in the latter sense. In Revelation 19:10 the expression "the spirit of prophecy" refers to an instance of what Paul called "the manifestation of the Spirit"—the outward evidence of the Spirit within. 1 Corinthians 12:7. This evidence, or manifestation, is given as a result of the gifts of the Spirit—in the present case, prophecy. 1 Corinthians 12:10. Through the "gift" of prophecy the prophet receives the message which he in turn proclaims to others as a manifestation of the work of the Spirit—"the spirit of prophecy."

In this chapter we will investigate the purpose, the function, and the continuity of the gift of prophecy.

## II. The Purpose of the Gift

Primarily, the gift of prophecy serves as a way for God to communicate His will to human beings with whom, because of sin, He cannot speak face to face. The following texts illustrate some of the things God sought to reveal, to communicate, or to accomplish through the gift of prophecy operating in men. °Notice what each contributes to the great purpose of the gift. For example: In 2 Samuel 12:1-7, God, through the prophet, pointed out specific sin in the life of David; in Acts 13:1-3, God chose Barnabas and Saul to be workers.

*Numbers 12:6	Luke 1:67-79	Hosea 12:9-13
*2 Samuel 12:1-7	*John 16:13	*Amos 3:7
2 Samuel 23:1-3	*Acts 3:18	*Romans 1:1-3
*2 Chronicles 36:14-16	*Acts 13:1-3	Revelation 1:1, 10, 11;
*Nehemiah 9:28-30	Acts 21:8-12	2:29; 3:22
	*Jeremiah 17:27	

## III. The Scope of Instruction Through the Gift

All the instruction we need to guide us in this life and to prepare us for the life to come has been given us through the gift of prophecy. No phase of life has been overlooked. The messages which the Spirit "moved" the prophets to write provide a basis for our every decision. However, the principles have not been stated theoretically and catalogued so we may use the Scriptures like a dictionary or encyclopedia without having read the whole book and made its ideas our own. Most of the principles have been illustrated in life situations. It is left with us to study the situations and the way God dealt with human beings, to discover the principles involved, and to apply them to our life in comparable situations.

Here is a list of some of the areas of life for which the Bible gives guidance, with illustrations under each. At this point we will not analyze the principles, but simply notice the wide range of instruction given through the gift of prophecy. °Study at least two or three verses in each section and note the varied instruction.

### 1. The spiritual life

*Isaiah 26:1-4	Matthew 6:9-13	Acts 2:38
Jeremiah 29:11-14	John 3:5	*1 John 1:9

### 2. Intellectual development

*Deuteronomy 4:1-6	Job 28:28	Luke 2:52
1 Kings 3:5-14	*Proverbs 1:1-9	Romans 12:2

### 3. The physical body

Genesis 2:7	*Proverbs 17:22	*1 Corinthians 6:19, 20
Proverbs 3:7, 8	Romans 12:1	*1 Corinthians 10:31

### 4. Relationships with other people

Genesis 2:24	1 Timothy 5:8	*Matthew 7:12
*Exodus 20:12	Matthew 5:44	Matthew 25:40

### 5. Business matters

*Leviticus 19:35, 36	Proverbs 11:1	*Malachi 3:8-12
Deuteronomy 8:17, 18; 24:14, 15	Proverbs 22:29	Ephesians 6:5-7

Through the gift of prophecy God has covered the complete range of instruction needed by the human family. No matter what question or problem faces us, God has communicated enough knowledge of His will to guide our understanding and decision if we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us.

#### IV. The Tests of the Prophet

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” 1 John 4:1. God expects us to test the experience and the messages of those who claim to have been endowed with spiritual gifts. We are to determine for ourselves whether the gifts are genuine. But God has not left it to us to devise the tests we should apply to such persons. The Scriptures clearly state the standards by which their claims are to be judged.

God’s people have applied the tests to professed prophets, and the Bible prophets have met every test. We shall review the tests at this time in order to learn better how to apply them to later professed prophets.

**1. The life of the prophet.** Twice within a few sentences Jesus pointed out that we may test professed prophets by “their fruits.” Matthew 7:16, 20. We may extend this beyond the personal life of the prophet so that it will include the influence of his life and work. If his message is inspired by the Holy Spirit it will produce “the fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5: 22) in the lives of those who accept it.

Two cautions are to be observed in applying this test: (1) The fact that a man has been called to be a prophet does not mean that he is perfect. We are not to discard his message simply because we observe human weaknesses in him. James 5:17. However, the trend of his life should be in harmony with the principles of God’s word. (2) We must consider the results in the lives of those who accept the messages of the prophet. While there are always some who accept truth in theory only, if the prophet’s message does not produce “the fruit of the Spirit” it is to be rejected. Jeremiah 23:13, 16.

**2. The harmony of the prophet’s message with the Scriptures.** All divine revelation comes from God, and He does not change; His purposes are always the same; His standards of character remain constant. With Him there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” James 1:17. The Holy Spirit distributes the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4) and He never contradicts the instruction or testimony given previously.

Jeremiah 23:9-40 and Jeremiah 28 portray professed prophets giving messages contrary to the word of the Lord revealed through former prophets. °Read these chapters carefully. Notice especially Jeremiah 23:13, 16-18, 21, 22, 25-28, 30-36. In Jeremiah 28 notice that Hananiah is identified as a false prophet by the fact that his prophecy differed from an earlier message. Compare Jeremiah’s message in Jeremiah 25:11 and Jeremiah 27:16 with the message of Hananiah in Jeremiah 28:1-3, 11.

Christ’s warning against false prophets is based on this same harmony

in the prophets. In Matthew 24:24 Jesus spoke of the deceptiveness of false prophets. Then He reminded His disciples how they could determine whether the message of the professed prophets was from God: “Behold, I have told you before.” Matthew 24:25. He followed the reminder with an illustration of a testimony that could not be accepted because it was contrary to what had been spoken previously by a messenger of the Lord.

The Scriptures are not to be tested by the messages of later prophets, but the messages of prophets are to be tested by the Scriptures. “They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. vii.

**3. The confirmation of fulfilled prophecy.** “The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.” Jeremiah 28:9. This was not a new principle in Jeremiah’s day, for Moses stated it negatively in response to a question he knew would arise in many minds. Deuteronomy 18:21, 22. A part of Samuel’s identification as “a prophet of the Lord” was that God “did let none of his words fall to the ground.” 1 Samuel 3:19. Predictions of future events formed a comparatively small part of prophetic messages. But when predictions were made, their accuracy needed to be demonstrated.

Many Bible prophecies were conditional even though specific conditions may not have been stated when the prophecy was given. In instances where predictions were not fulfilled, the reasons were clearly discernible. °Study the prophecy of Jonah in the light of the principle set forth in Jeremiah 18:7-10. Except in circumstances like these, we may test a prophet’s experience by whether or not his predictions are fulfilled. See Deuteronomy 18:20-22.

**4. The confession of Christ.** “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.” 1 John 4:1-3. The life, teaching, and work of one possessing the gift of prophecy will exalt Christ and lead men to Him. The Spirit who inspires prophets is the Spirit of Christ, and, in the words of the Saviour, “He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.” John 16:14.

To meet this test, one must do more than simply acknowledge that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived on this earth as man. One must accept into his life all that the Bible teaches concerning Christ—His deity and pre-existence, His virgin birth, sinless life, atoning death, resurrection,

ascension; ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, and His return to take His people to heaven.

Throughout the Bible we find examples of the timeliness, the practical value, the certainty, the high spiritual character, and the freedom from human influence that we would expect to characterize the messages of God to His people. They help to confirm our confidence in a prophet who meets all major Biblical tests.

No one of the Bible tests taken alone is sufficient to identify a true prophet, though failure to meet one test will indicate a false prophet. All tests must be considered, and each one must bear its full weight in testing the claims of a professed spokesman for God. Application of the Scriptural tests, accompanied by the prompting of the Spirit who will "guide you into all truth" (John 16:13), will enable God's people to distinguish false prophets from the true.

## V. The Importance of the Gift

We cannot overestimate the importance of a gift that God has used as the principal means of communication between Him and His people. The prophet is chosen to speak forth God's message. In almost every instance in the Old Testament the word "prophet" is translated from the Hebrew *nabi*. Its meaning is perhaps best described in the words of the Lord to Moses: "And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet [*nabi*]. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land." Exodus 7:1, 2. Moses stood in relation to Pharaoh as God stood in relation to His people. Aaron represented Moses, was his mouthpiece, as a prophet represents God—is His mouthpiece. Moses gave the word to Aaron, and Aaron spoke the message to Pharaoh.

The prophet did not speak his own message. Thus his messages could not be regarded by God's people as would ordinary messages, neither could they be rejected as ordinary messages. Every message was vital when it was first delivered and it continues to have instruction for us who study it centuries later. 1 Corinthians 10:11.

°What do these texts reveal in regard to the way the messages of the prophets should be viewed?

*Numbers 12:6	Luke 16:31	John 5:39
*1 Samuel 8:1-8	Luke 24:27	Revelation 1:3
Luke 11:28	John 1:45	Revelation 22:7

°What are some of the results of rejecting God's messages?

*1 Samuel 15 (esp. vs. 1-3, 8, 9, 13-15, 22, 35)	*2 Kings 17:13-23 2 Chronicles 6:15, 16 Jeremiah 36 (esp. vs. 23, 28-32)	Zechariah 7:8-14 Matthew 23:34-37
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°What are some results of accepting and following God's messages?

*2 Chronicles 20:14-25 (esp. v. 20)	Malachi 4:5, 6	Matthew 10:40, 41
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## TOPICS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What circumstances made it necessary for God to communicate with men through prophets? Be specific.
2. In Bible times prophets served in many different capacities in government and in the service of the Lord. In what ways did they serve? In addition to the examples given below add three others. Can you see reasons why the Lord would use men of such varied capabilities and in such a variety of positions?

Genesis 20:7	2 Samuel 7:2	Matthew 13:57
Deuteronomy 18:15	Jeremiah 1:1-5	Matthew 24:15;
1 Samuel 3:20		Daniel 1:3-6

3. Several women prophets are mentioned in the Bible. Learn all you can about these women and the work they accomplished.

Exodus 15:20, 21	Nehemiah 6:14	Luke 2:36
Judges 4:4, 5	Isaiah 8:3	Acts 21:9
2 Kings 22:14		

## The Gift of Prophecy, II

Are there time limitations on the manifestation of the gift of prophecy? Was it limited to God's people of Old and New Testament times? On the basis of several prophecies, as well as on our understanding of how God deals with His people, it is clear that there is no limitation as long as the church needs the gift.

### I. The Continuity of the Gift

Statements in both the Old and New Testaments indicate that the gift of prophecy will operate in the "latter" or "last" days. No Bible passage even hints that the working of the gift would cease when the books that form the Bible canon were finished. The major evidence is divided into four groups—evidence in: (1) the Old Testament; (2) the words of Jesus; (3) the words of Paul; and (4) the words of John the revelator.

**1. Evidence in the Old Testament.** The most prominent Old Testament statement of the continuing gift of prophecy is found in Joel 2:28, 29. God promised that "afterward" (indefinite as to time) He would pour out His Spirit "upon all flesh" and that the young would have visions and the old men would have dreams. On the Day of Pentecost Peter pointed out that there was a partial fulfillment of this blessing originally intended for God's faithful in ancient Israel, but it was transferred to the faithful in modern Israel—the Christian church.

Though visions and dreams are specifically mentioned in both Joel's account and Peter's sermon, it does not mean that these will be the only manifestations of the outpouring of the Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit were in evidence in the early church, and they are to be found in the latter-day church as they are needed. 1 Corinthians 12:7-10; Ephesians 4:8-13. It is significant that these passages call special attention to the prophetic gift.

**2. Evidence in the words of Jesus.** In none of His recorded predictions concerning the future of His church did Jesus state specifically that the gift of prophecy would be present in it in the latter days. However, His words of caution can be understood only as they relate to the presence of the gift in the last days. See Matthew 24:24-27. If there was to be no genuine

manifestation of the gift of prophecy in the last days, what warning would Jesus probably have given?

**3. Evidence in the words of Paul.** The clearest statements on the continuation of spiritual gifts after apostolic times are found in Paul's letters to the churches. The gift of prophecy is not singled out for particular emphasis. It is simply included among the other gifts that Christ bestowed on the church through the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:8-13; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; and 1 Corinthians 12:28 present the range of the gifts. It is interesting to see that the gift of prophecy is the only gift mentioned in all three of Paul's lists. °How long may we look for the gifts to be continued?

**4. Evidence in the words of John.** "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Revelation 19:10. "The testimony of Jesus" and "the spirit of prophecy" are synonymous in the sense in which they are used here. The testimony from Jesus through the prophets is called "the spirit of prophecy." This definition clarifies the meaning of Revelation 12:17, where "the testimony of Jesus Christ" is declared to be one of the identifying characteristics of the remnant church that is warred upon by the "dragon." The other prominent characteristic of the remnant is that they "keep the commandments of God." So we may read for "the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ," the equivalent description, "the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the spirit of prophecy."

Further attention will be given in later chapters to the meaning of the "remnant," but for our present purposes we may say simply that it refers to the people of God in the last days. It is clear that the gift of prophecy will be present among the remnant.

### II. The Need for the Gift in the Last Days

God has not only given instruction, admonition, and prediction by His prophets to His people, but He has used His spokesmen either as leaders or as counselors to the leaders of His people. See Amos 3:7; Hosea 12:13; Isaiah 37:21-38. God's people have been guided in times of crisis by such prophets as Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, Jeremiah, Zechariah, John the Baptist, Paul, and John the revelator. Through such men God gave a body of instruction that is applicable to Christians in every generation.

Since we have access to the experiences of God's people, what need do we have for a continuation of the gift of prophecy or for the revival of it among the remnant? We need it for two distinct reasons: (1) to help us understand Scripture, and (2) to direct the leadership.

**1. Understanding increased through revival of the gift.** Because God

has given a complete guide to faith and practice in His word, we do not need additions to that word. The revelation of God's character, the presentation of the plan of salvation, and the principles of Christian living are sufficient.

On the other hand, we are removed some nineteen centuries from the time the Scriptures were completed. During this long period there was a falling away from the principles of God's word. At present God is restoring those principles and renewing an understanding of His message. Today God's people need definite and direct guidance in order that they may understand and apply Bible truth.

**2. Leadership through the gift.** God is planning to reach the whole world with His message of redemption. (See chapters 51-54.) To accomplish this, He has called a group to carry His message everywhere under the direction of the Holy Spirit. To form such a body there is as much need for divinely guided leadership today as there was in ancient times. The gift of prophecy might be manifested through leaders or through counselors to leaders; but, whatever the method, the church in the last days needs divinely directed leadership.

### III. Evidences of the Presence of the Gift in the Last Days

The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes that God has given the needed divinely inspired instruction for the last days through the ministry of Ellen G. White. See the formal statement of this belief in the "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists" as quoted on page 53.

For more than a century evidence has been accumulating that confirms the acceptance of Ellen White's ministry by Seventh-day Adventist pioneers. They believed her experience to be a modern manifestation of the prophetic gift. We refer you to a list of books that present this evidence. In addition, you will have opportunity in your study of Christian fundamentals to consider what Ellen G. White taught on each major topic. The full harmony of her teachings with those of the Bible is perhaps the strongest and most repeatedly confirmed evidence that her messages were inspired.

In this book are quotations from Ellen G. White's writings. They are included as divinely inspired comment on and insight into the various topics. They help us to see the full import of the subjects and their application to our time and experience.

°As you study the material in the following references, keep in mind the four major tests of a prophet and the other lesser indications of divine inspiration.

Christian, L. H. *The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts*, pages 161-174. See also other parts of this book.

Daniells, A. G. *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, pages 253-378.

Froom, L. E. *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. 4, pp. 989-1019.

Haynes, C. B. *The Gift of Prophecy*, pages 108-176.

Jemison, T. H. *A Prophet Among You*, pages 135-293.

Loughborough, J. N. *The Great Second Advent Movement*, pages 442-473.

———. *Rise and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*, pages 180-195.

*Our Firm Foundation* (Report of the 1952 Seventh-day Adventist Bible Conference), vol. 1, pp. 217-242.

Rebok, D. E. *Believe His Prophets*, pages 30-182.

Spalding, A. W. *There Shines a Light*, pages 5-92.

Spicer, W. A. *The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement*, pages 7-71.

Wilcox, F. M. *The Testimony of Jesus*, pages 32-73.

On the test of the attitude toward Christ and the teachings regarding Him, see:

White, Ellen G. *Christ's Object Lessons*.

———. *The Desire of Ages*.

———. *Steps to Christ*.

———. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*.

### TOPICS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Consider the purposes served by the gift of prophecy in Bible times. List all the reasons you can think of why the gift is needed today.

2. Sometimes Luke 16:16 is quoted as Scriptural proof that there would be no true prophets after John. Is that what the text teaches? Explain.

3. Read selections from two or three sources suggested in the list at the end of the chapter. Under the headings of the four major tests of a prophet classify the evidences you find confirming Ellen White's claims to be a messenger of the Lord.

## The Gift of Prophecy, III

We now turn to the purposes of the gift of prophecy as manifested through Ellen G. White, and how the messages given through her should be used. We have noted that the messages are intended primarily to increase our understanding of the Bible and assist the leaders of God's people. To determine more fully the purpose and uses of the messages, we must turn to the writings themselves. We find three basic purposes for the writings: (1) to lead us to the Bible; (2) to help us understand the Bible; and (3) to help us apply Bible principles to daily living.

### I. The Purposes of the Messages

**1. To lead us to the Bible.** "The Lord has sent His people much instruction, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. 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*, page 125:2.

"The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested."—*The Great Controversy*, page vii:3.

"The *Testimonies* are not to belittle the word of God, but to exalt it and attract minds to it."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 665:2.

"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*, vol. 5, p. 663:2.

"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*, vol. 5, p. 665:0.

"The testimonies of the Spirit of God are given to direct men to His word, which has been neglected."—*Selected Messages*, b. 1, p. 46:3.

**2. To help us understand the Bible.** "God has seen fit in this manner to bring the minds of His people to His word, to give them a clearer understanding of it."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 663:2.

"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."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 665:1.

**3. To help us apply Bible principles.** "I 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, reproofed, and counseled. I saw that all should search their own hearts and lives closely to see if they had not made the same mistakes for which others were corrected and if the warnings given for others did not apply to their own cases. If so, they should feel that the counsel and reproofs were given especially for them and should make as practical an application of them as though they were especially addressed to themselves."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 660:2.

"Yet 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*, page vii:2.

"If the people who now profess to be God's peculiar treasure would obey His requirements, as specified in His word, special testimonies would not be given to awaken them to their duty, and impress upon them their sinfulness and their fearful danger in neglecting to obey the word of God."—*Life Sketches*, pages 200:3 to 201:0.

"The written testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 665:1.

It is obvious that Ellen White did not claim that her writings were to be accepted in place of or as an addition to the Bible. She recognized the primacy of the Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice for the Christian. "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*, page vii:1. If there is any one characteristic of Ellen White's writings that stands out above all others, it is that they exalt God and the Bible.

The Bible and these modern writings do not compete with one another for first place in the minds of God's people. The relationship is somewhat like that of a master workman and a helper—the Bible states God's will and His purposes, the Ellen G. White writings help us understand and apply the word. "The more we look at the promises of the word of God, the brighter they grow. The more we practice them, the deeper will be our understanding of them. Our position and faith is in the Bible. And never do we want any soul to bring in the Testimonies ahead of the Bible."—*Evangelism*, page 256:3. "The Testimonies are not to take the place of the word."—*Ibid*.

The method of inspiration is the same in both instances. There is no evidence in the Bible of differences, or "degrees," of inspiration: that is, of one messenger's writings being "more inspired" than another's. Nathan, whose writings do not form a book of the Bible, was inspired like Isaiah, whose book is one of the best-known in the Old Testament. The Scriptures refer to many prophets whose writings are not a part of the sacred canon. Thus there is no reason why inspired writings cannot be closely related to the Bible and serve the purposes mentioned without intruding into that area of supremacy which is the province of the Bible alone.

## II. The Uses of the Messages in Bible Study

In connection with earlier chapters of this book you read and discussed quotations from the Ellen G. White writings found in the text or in footnotes. They have been placed there as comments on the Bible subject, to aid our understanding of the topic. They are not a part of the Bible presentation of the subject, but they give insight and understanding, and help us to reach correct conclusions regarding the meaning of the Bible doctrine.

There are at least five ways in which these spirit of prophecy writings may be used to aid Bible study:

1. To simplify the statement of great spiritual truths. For example, sanctification is described as "daily dying to self and daily conformity to the will of God."—*Life Sketches*, page 237:1.
2. To bring out spiritual lessons. For an example, see *Christ's Object Lessons*, pages 325-365, the chapter called "Talents."
3. To give insight into the meanings of difficult passages. See the comments on Philippians 2:5-7 listed in *The S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 164.
4. To point out details that fill in the broad outlines of prophecy given in the Bible—for an example, see *The Great Controversy*, pages 613-634, "The Time of Trouble."

5. To guide in reaching correct conclusions in various phases of Bible study.

## III. The Study and Use of the Ellen G. White Writings

As special messages from God to His remnant people, the writings of Ellen G. White deserve regular, prayerful study. The same principles of study should be followed that are so important in the study of the Scriptures: (1) Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit; (2) be ready to accept truth; (3) recognize the harmony that exists throughout the writings; (4) consider both the immediate and the general context; (5) allow the writings to explain themselves.

If they are rightly used, these Ellen G. White writings will add greatly to our understanding of the Scriptures. The responsibility rests with us to make use of all God has provided to help us gain the fullest understanding of His character and of His will for us.

This book will give many quotations that shed light on the meaning and application of the Scriptures. The quotations have been placed in footnotes and in a supplement at the back of the book.

## TOPICS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Read *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 654-691, "The Nature and Influence of the *Testimonies*." Gather as many points as possible under each of the following headings:

- (1) Relation of the Ellen G. White writings to the Bible.
- (2) What these writings are intended to do for God's people.
- (3) The uses that should be made of the writings.
- (4) Results of various attitudes toward the writings.

2. To get a picture of the contribution the spirit of prophecy writings make to Bible study, look up at least five references listed in the Scripture Index in *The Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White* or at the end of a chapter in *The S.D.A. Bible Commentary*. In some cases you will find that the text is simply quoted without specific comment. In such a case see if the setting in which it is quoted throws any light on the meaning of the text. Where a comment is made, find what it adds to your understanding of the text. This is especially profitable in studying the lives of Bible characters.

3. Find at least one additional illustration of each of the first four uses of the spirit of prophecy writings mentioned in Section II of this chapter, *The Uses of the Messages in Bible Study*, on page 66.