

Should the writings of sister White be used as a TEST OF FELLOWSHIP?

There should be no trial, or labor with those who have never seen the individual having visions, and who have had no personal knowledge of the influence of the visions. Such should not be deprived of the benefits and privileges of the church, if their Christian course is otherwise correct, and they have formed a good Christian character. GW92 279.3

Yet when men long into truth starts to quibble with what has been proved to be truth, a word of warning should not be withheld from them:

Some of our brethren have had long experience in the truth, and have for years been acquainted with me and with the influence of the visions. They have tested the truthfulness of these testimonies, and asserted their belief in them. They have felt the powerful influence of the Spirit of God resting upon them to witness to the truthfulness of the visions. **If such, when reproved through vision, rise up against them, and work secretly to injure our influence, they should be faithfully dealt with, for their influence is endangering those who lack experience.** —Testimonies for the Church 1:382. GW92 280.1

IN PUBLIC LABOR DO NOT MAKE PROMINENT, AND QUOTE THAT WHICH SISTER WHITE HAS WRITTEN, AS AUTHORITY TO SUSTAIN YOUR POSITIONS. TO DO THIS WILL NOT INCREASE FAITH IN THE TESTIMONIES. Bring your evidences, clear and plain, from the Word of God. A "Thus saith the Lord" is the strongest testimony you can possibly present to the people. Let none be educated to look to Sister White, but to the mighty God, who gives instruction to Sister White. --Letter 11, 1894.

Q. - **Do you require a person to believe the Testimonies before baptizing him and receiving him into church fellowship?** {1907 JNL, COOD 162.3}

A. - **Instruction should be given with reference to the gift of prophecy**, and its **manifestation** among Seventh-day Adventists, and the candidate should have **opportunity** to **read enough of Sister White's writings to learn the practical bearing and nature of her work among this people.** There have been cases in the past where persons were **baptized before they had even HEARD** that there was such a gift among this denomination. Such a course is decidedly wrong. In some instances, there was afterward "war in the camp," as those individuals **claimed they had been DECEIVED by being brought into fellowship before they knew that the spirit of prophecy was among this people.** Just how we should **deal with different cases in reference to belief or unbelief in the Testimonies is plainly stated by Sister White herself, in "Gospel Workers," pages 279. 280.** {1907 JNL, COOD 162.4}

On page 247 of the same book is presented **how WITHHOLDING the Testimonies from the people leave them without that which would "carry them forward to an experimental knowledge of vital godliness."** {1907 JNL, COOD 162.5}

The Reference cited

"There were some in-----who were God's children, and yet doubted the visions. Others had no opposition, yet dared not take a decided stand in regard to them.THERE SHOULD BE NO TRIAL OR LABOR WITH THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER SEEN THE INDIVIDUAL HAVING VISIONS, and who have had no personal knowledge of the influence of the visions. Such should NOT BE DEPRIVED of the benefits and PRIVILEGES OF THE CHURCH, IF THEIR CHRISTIAN COURSE IS OTHERWISE CORRECT, AND THEY HAVE FORMED A GOOD CHRISTIAN CHARACTER."

Some of our brethren have had long experience in the truth, and have for years been acquainted with me and with the influence of the visions. They have tested the truthfulness of these testimonies, and asserted their belief in them. They have felt the powerful influence of the Spirit of God resting upon them to witness to the truthfulness of the visions. **IF SUCH, WHEN REPROVED THROUGH VISION, RISE UP AGAINST THEM, AND WORK SECRETLY TO INJURE OUR INFLUENCE, THEY SHOULD BE FAITHFULLY DEALT WITH, FOR THEIR INFLUENCE IS ENDANGERING THOSE WHO LACK EXPERIENCE.** —Testimonies for the Church 1:382. GW92 280.1

THERE is a class of persons who are determined to have it that **the REVIEW and its conductors make the views of Mrs. White a TEST OF DOCTRINE AND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.** It may be duty to notice these persons on account of the part they are acting, which is **calculated to deceive some.** {October 16, 1855 JWe, ARSH 61.19}

What has the REVIEW to do with Mrs. W.'s views? The sentiments published in its columns are all **drawn from the Holy Scriptures.** No writer of the REVIEW has ever referred to them as authority on any point. The REVIEW for five years has not published one of them. Its motto has been, "The Bible, and the Bible alone, the only rule of faith and duty." **Then why should these men charge the REVIEW with being a supporter of Mrs. W.'s views?** {October 16, 1855 JWe, ARSH 61.20}

Again, **How has the Editor of the REVIEW regarded Visions, and the gifts of the Gospel Church for more than eight years past?** His uniform statements in print on this subject will satisfactorily answer this question. The following is from a Tract he published in 1847: {October 16, 1855 JWe, ARSH 61.21}

"The Bible is a perfect and complete revelation. It is our only rule of faith and practice. But this is no reason why God may not show the past, present, and future fulfillment of his word, in these last days, by dreams and visions, according to Peter's testimony. **True visions are given to lead us to God, and to his written word;** but those that are given for a new rule of faith and practice, separate from the Bible, cannot be from God, and should be rejected." {October 16, 1855 JWe, ARSH 61.22}

Again, four years since, he wrote on the Gifts of the Gospel Church, re-published in the REVIEW for Oct. 3rd, 1854, from which is taken the following: {October 16, 1855 JWe, ARSH 61.23}

"Every Christian is therefore in duty bound to take the Bible as a perfect rule of faith and duty. He should pray fervently to be aided by the Holy Spirit in searching the Scriptures for the whole truth, and for his whole duty. **He is not at liberty to turn from them to learn his duty through any of the gifts. We say that the very moment he does, he places the gifts in a wrong place, and takes an extremely dangerous position.**" {October 16, 1855 JWe, ARSH 61.24}

Now if these paragraphs were not in print, his enemies might accuse him of changing his position; but as one was printed eight years since, and the other four, and re-printed one year since, they are nails driven in right places. **Slandorous reports must fall powerless before facts of this character.** {October 16, 1855 JWe, ARSH 61.25}

Again, in the REVIEW Extra, published March, 1855, is the following statement from the Church that had been personally acquainted with the facts in the case for three years: {October 16, 1855 JWe, ARSH 61.26}

This certifies that we have been acquainted with Bro. and Sr. White, and their teachings, and labors in church trials, and have never known them to urge the visions on any one as a portion of religious faith, or make them a test of fellowship.

*In behalf of the Church,
J. T. ORTON,)*

S. T. BELDEN,) Deacons.

T. B. MEAD,)

The Publishing Committee have also spoken upon this subject, yet these persons will have it that the Visions are made a test. This same story was repeated over and over by the Harbinger, to raise prejudice against the Sabbath. These men have now taken it up, if possible, in a meaner style. They have relieved Eld. Marsh in this department, and some of them far out-strip him in zeal and malice. {October 16, 1855 JWe, ARSH 61.28}

But what deserves especial attention here, is the unrighteous use some are making of the Visions. They take the advantage of the common prejudices against Visions, misrepresent them, and those who are not ready to join them in anathematizing them as the work of Satan, then brand any view held by the body of Sabbath-keepers as the "Vision view," and not the Bible view of the subject. In this way an unhallowed prejudice can be excited in the minds of some against any view, and even all the views held by that body of Christians called Advent Sabbath-keepers. This course has been, and is being pursued on the subjects of the Two-horned beast, Sanctuary, Time to commence the Sabbath and period of the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth. It should be here understood that all these views as held by the body of Sabbath-keepers, **were brought**

out from the Scriptures before Mrs. W. had any view in regard to them. These sentiments are founded upon the Scriptures as their only basis. {October 16, 1855 JWe, ARSH 61.29}

E. R. Pinney held as early as 1844, that the Kingdom of God would not be established on the earth till the close of the seventh millennium. The Editor of the REVIEW has taught the same since 1845, five years before Mrs. W. had a view of this subject - that the saints would go to heaven at Christ's second advent, [John vii,33; xiii,33,36; xiv,1-3,28; 1Pet.i,3-8; Rev.v,10,] that the 1000 years' reign of the saints in judgment [Rev.xx,4; Matt.xix,28] would be in the "Father's house" above - New Jerusalem - which Jesus has gone to prepare for his followers, while the earth remained desolate, [Jer.iv,19-26; xxv,15-33; Isa.xxviii,21,22; Zeph.i,2-18; iii,6-8; Isa.xiii,9-11; xxiv,1-6; 2Thess.i,7-9; ii,8-12,] and that at the end of the 1000 years, Jesus would return to the earth with his SAINTS, [Zech.xiv,5; Jude 14,15,] to execute judgment upon ALL, from Cain to the latest ungodly sinner, which cannot be until the second resurrection, when all ungodly sinners will be raised. {October 16, 1855 JWe, ARSH 61.30}

Now, Mrs. W.'s view of this subject was not till 1850, yet the view of this subject held by the body of Sabbath-keepers before and since 1850 is now branded as the "Vision view," and those who hold it are represented as forsaking the Bible and taking another rule of faith. A brother writing from the West to a brother in N. Y., on this subject, says: "God will as certainly reject James White if he rejects his word as he has rejected Himes and Marsh." **Now it has come to this, that in order to be sure to avoid the charges of infidelity and heresy from these men, it is necessary to renounce every point of religious faith with which Mrs. W.'s views are in harmony.** Every friend of truth and right should protest against so unrighteous a course. Brethren, be on your guard against this crafty mode of action to divide the Church of God. **LET THE VISIONS STAND UPON THEIR OWN MERITS. It is our duty to teach, and to hold up the hands of those who teach the word of God; also to mark those who cause divisions.** {October 16, 1855 JWe, ARSH 62.1}

BUT THESE MEN ARE NOT WILLING TO LEAVE THE VISIONS ON THEIR OWN MERITS, AND LET PEOPLE ALONE WHO BELIEVE THEM, who take the Bible as their only rule of faith and duty. No, some among them pursue them with deception, and slander. The publishing and preaching of such is an issue of bitterness against the Visions, and those who will not join them in their work of death. **THEY MAKE THE VISIONS A TEST.** Their principal theme, even before an ungodly rabble, is opposition to, and ridicule of, the Visions, and their highest ambition and glory is to disaffect persons and divide Churches and families. Of this they boast from place to place, and in their **sheet of scandal.** All persons may now see who it is that make Mrs. W.'s views a test. While we take the Bible, and the Bible alone as our rule of faith and duty, and are rigidly devoted to teaching the word, these persons, as they go out from us, seem to become at once enraged against the Visions, and imbued with bitterness against their former brethren, **(R. Hicks is a good example,)** and engage with a rash zeal to divide Churches, and separate the nearest and

dearest friends. What is their test in this work? - The Visions! {October 16, 1855 JWe, ARSH 62.2}

Now we shall go right along believing and teaching the word of the Lord. This is our business. AND IF WE CHOOSE TO BELIEVE MRS. W.'S VIEWS WHICH HARMONIZE WITH THE WORD, THIS IS OUR BUSINESS, AND NOBODY'S ELSE. But if we should leave the word, and look for a rule of faith and duty by some new revelation, then it would be the business of the Church to silence me as a religious teacher. {October 16, 1855 JWe, ARSH 62.3}

We have exposed some of the false statements of these men, and supposed this was sufficient. We care not a straw for their slanderous falsehoods on our own part; but if those who are prepared to show up their falsehoods, think the cause demands their exposure, let them forward their testimonies to the Office, and we will thoroughly expose them. This may be best. J. W. {October 16, 1855 JWe, ARSH 62.4}

Letter from Bro. Carver

BRO. WHITE: It is with heart-felt joy that I take my pen to bear witness to the goodness of our God, and I do this the more cheerfully because I took occasion not long since to write to you in a **different strain concerning the church at Richmond and Dayton**. In the good providence of God it became my privilege to take Bro. Snook to Richmond on his way to visit the churches, and I shall ever have reason to thank God for what I saw and experienced while with that church. To me individually it was a feast of fat things from the Lord, especially our last meeting, when the whole church came together to partake of the emblems of a crucified Saviour, and that other ordinance of humility, feet-washing. {March 3, 1863 JWe, ARSH 111.2}

For months past my mind had been depressed by trials and temptations to such a degree that the burden of my prayers became, Lord, withdraw not thy Holy Spirit from me; leave me not to myself, or I fall. But at that meeting the Lord graciously condescended to pour into my soul such a rich blessing that the language of my heart is, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. {March 3, 1863 JWe, ARSH 111.3}

Yes, I feel a consciousness that the Lord has revived his work in me, also a sweet assurance that he will never leave me nor forsake me, but that I shall have a home with his people in the everlasting kingdom of his dear Son. I cannot sufficiently praise God for what he has done for me, a poor, weak, sinful man, and then to think of the joys, blessedness, and glory yet in reservation for me, if faithful, is surely enough to melt the hardest heart, and cause one to cry out, Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man that thou visitest him. {March 3, 1863 JWe, ARSH 111.4}

My heart was made to rejoice also when our oldest daughter manifested a determination to go with the remnant to mount Zion. Owing to peculiar circumstances, this important step will unavoidably bring great trials upon her, and I commend her to the prayers of the

church, that the rich blessing of God may attend her, and that she may with the people of God at last have a right to enter those pearly gates of the New Jerusalem, and partake of the blessedness of the new earth. My heart also yearns as never before for our other children, and O what a solace it would be to my heart to have the assurance that we should make an unbroken family in the kingdom of God. I solicit your prayers, especially for our eldest son, now in the army for the Union, that the Lord may preserve him alive, and so work upon his judgment and conscience, as to bring him to the cross of Christ for the salvation of his soul. {March 3, 1863 JWe, ARSH 111.5}

But I wish to tell you what I saw at that meeting, and the effect it had upon my mind. A short time ago I trembled for that church WHEN I LEARNED THAT THEY WERE MAKING, AS I THOUGHT, AN UNDUE TEST OF THE VISIONS OF SISTER WHITE IN ADMITTING MEMBERS INTO CHURCH FELLOWSHIP, and that several souls had been injured thereby. This fault I have seen **thoroughly corrected**, so that the church **now** stands upon ground that God can and does approve and bless, and I hope and trust it will have **a good effect upon those who have been injured.** {March 3, 1863 JWe, ARSH 111.6}

What I witnessed at our recent meeting has increased my confidence that God is again visiting his people by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and my earnest prayer is that my heart may be in a state of preparation when the time shall come for the out-pouring of the latter rain. {March 3, 1863 JWe, ARSH 111.7}

I have long believed that the mighty power of God would be displayed in behalf of the remnant who should live when the Lord is about to come, and I believe that those who are keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus are that remnant; **and if so, why should it be thought a thing incredible that the gifts of the Spirit are among us?** I trust that God in his infinite mercy is preparing me for that refreshing that is to come from his presence. See Acts iii,19. How appropriate it is that just before the Lord comes, and while he is yet in the heavenly sanctuary making the great atonement by virtue of which our sins are to be blotted out, that there should be a refreshing from his presence, and what better adapted to produce this refreshing than the outpouring of his Holy Spirit? {March 3, 1863 JWe, ARSH 111.8}

O brethren, there is a good time coming to the people of God; it is coming from his own hand. Now it behooves us to be up and doing. Let us lay aside, so far as possible, the cares of life. Let us not have our affections set on the world, but resist all the adverse influences that Satan knows so well how to bring against us. Let us seek wisdom and strength where alone it may be found, and putting our trust in Jesus, go forward in the path of duty. That God may guide and direct his people in all their ways to his glory and his salvation, is the prayer of your unworthy brother.

H. E. CARVER.

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Testing the Prophetic Gift

IT IS NOT THE PRIMARY purpose of this volume to state the Bible arguments in favor of spiritual gifts, including the gift of prophecy, as an abiding heavenly endowment from the Lord to His church. When Christ gave His people the promise of the Holy Spirit, He said that, "another Comforter" will "abide with you forever." John 14:16. The idea that spiritual gifts were only to be seen in the church during the apostolic age is totally false. In the Scriptures there is not the slightest proof for such a view, and the only apparent reason why some churches teach this is that they do not have the gifts. On the other hand, proofs are most abundant that the gifts of the Spirit, and above all the prophetic gift, were to be in the church always, and especially in the church at the end of human history. **Seventh-day Adventists have ever taught that the prophetic gift and other spiritual gifts would be found in the remnant church, and also that in the future, during the time of the latter rain, still larger manifestations of these powers would be experienced than have yet appeared.** {1947 LHC, FSG 57.1}

Because of certain opposition and misunderstandings in regard to the revelations given to the Lord's messenger in our day, it was found necessary in the early editions of the Spirit of prophecy books to write a preface of explanation concerning the visions or an introduction on the Bible doctrine of the gifts. The first edition of Spiritual Gifts, printed in 1858, contains an introduction by R. F. Cottrell. It is quite an elaborate argument from the Scriptures in favor of the abiding nature and helpful fruitage of the prophetic gift. Elder James White wrote a number of such articles. One of the most convincing, called "**The Spirit of Prophecy**," was inserted as a preface in volume I of a set of larger books of the same title printed in 1870. Other men also prepared such introductions, but we who wrote them for books here or overseas came, in time, to understand that they were not so needful as was at first thought. **Mrs. White's books were themselves the best proof of their divine origin.** In fact, sometimes the reader found it easier to understand the book itself than the explanation of the book. In those years, too, there were many longer and shorter articles in the Review **in defense of the spiritual gifts**, especially as seen in the messages sent by the servant of the Lord. {1947 LHC, FSG 57.2}

In course of time, too, a goodly number of books or pamphlets were written by our leaders showing beyond a question that the **visions and messages of Mrs. E. G. White meet every Bible test of the prophetic gift.** {1947 LHC, FSG 58.1}

Such pamphlets were written by Uriah Smith, J. H. Waggoner, J. N. Andrews, as well as later ones by G. A. Irwin and others. A much larger and very excellent work entitled **Rise and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists was written by J. N. Loughborough, one of the early veterans, who had the great advantages of having seen and lived through what he was writing.** Some of these things may seem a bit out of date today, and, as some have said, not quite historical, but, after all, when men tell what they have seen themselves, it carries weight and is more likely to be true to fact than what some call history. It is still possible to secure these books, and our ministers do well to get them from some older

member who has finished with them. A later and most valuable book on the subject, called **The Testimony of Jesus by our veteran editor of the Review, F. M. Wilcox, is just now having a large sale. It gives information that all should have.** {1947 LHC, FSG 58.2}

We recommend these publications to our readers, and **first of all to our ministers.** They teach clearly that (1) spiritual gifts such as healing, tongues, and prophecy were not designed or given to the apostolic church alone, but are to be seen among God's people in all ages; (2) the gift of prophecy is to be found in the remnant church, that is, God's people just before the second advent; (3) spiritual gifts will be found only among commandment keeping Christians; (4) **although the Adventists do not make the Testimonies a new Bible or an addition to the Bible nor primarily a test of fellowship, yet they believe and follow these Testimonies as messages from God for this age;** (5) Mrs. White's writings **meet every fair Bible test of the prophetic gift** and contain abundant evidence of their divine origin and character. In this chapter, however, some other important points and experiences with the spiritual gifts through the years are being dealt with. {1947 LHC, FSG 59.1}

We live in an age of negative thinking, a deplorable result of the popular skepticism in many large religious circles. **Many believers today are so shy of false prophets that they are afraid even to accept the true.** Yet it is a greater spiritual **achievement** to discover and receive a true messenger of the Lord than to prove and reject those who mislead. In saying this we would not minimize the importance of rejecting every counterfeit religious leader or movement. The Scriptures distinctly teach us that we are not to believe "every spirit," but we are to "try the spirits." (1 John 4: 1.) To do so is not difficult, for the tests to be applied are plain and easily made by even the humblest believer. {1947 LHC, FSG 59.2}

When the Lord sends a servant with a message from heaven, that individual is always willing to submit to any fair test. In fact, almost all the prophets mentioned in the Bible had the experience of being tested by the people. {1947 LHC, FSG 60.1}

In the case of Samuel, one of the greatest of the seers, the prophetic call was revealed while he was yet a child, **so that right from the beginning of his work Israel accepted him as a prophet.** Then, too, the circumstances connected with his mother's experience before his birth gave the people confidence in him as a prophet. **John the Baptist was not accepted and in a way not rejected by the leaders in Israel.** They professed not to know whether he was sent from God, saying, "We cannot tell." Mark 11:33. However, his preaching was so Spirit filled that the honest in heart believed it. **And after his death "all men counted John, that he was a prophet."** Mark 11:32. During the Babylonian captivity, Ezekiel, one of the mightiest of prophets, had many "visions of God." He did some strange things as object lessons for the people, **but many did not believe.** In fact, not till after his death, when his visions were fulfilled, **were they sure that he was a prophet.** (Ezekiel 33:33. {1947 LHC, FSG 60.2}

In like manner Mrs. White in the beginning of her work as God's messenger met those who were not sure of her call and work. With many in America there was a strong

prejudice against prophets because of false prophets among the Mormons and spiritualists. Then, too, many churches which had no evidence of the prophetic gift in their midst would not conceive that God would speak to other religious bodies in this way. They were inclined to say with Zedekiah of old, "Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?" 2 Chronicles 18:23. **While the majority of Seventh day Adventists believed Mrs. White to be a messenger from the Lord, the question with some at least was more or less undecided as long as she lived.** However, when her work was finished and they looked at her godly life and found her teachings, without a single exception, in perfect harmony with the Scriptures, **the test was completed and she was fully accepted as one sent of God.** This is so generally true that when a person today embraces the Seventh-day Adventist faith he not only accepts the doctrine of spiritual gifts but also COMES TO BELIEVE IN THE GIFT OF PROPHECY AS MANIFESTED IN THE TEACHINGS OF MRS. WHITE. This faith, too, WILL GROW with the years as he sees her words fulfilled. {1947 LHC, FSG 60.3}

It is quite generally understood among Christian people today that Seventh-day Adventists believe in the perpetuity of spiritual gifts. It is also understood that we regard the visions of Mrs. White as having been given by the Spirit of God. However, the reasons why we believe in these gifts and the use which we make of spiritual gifts, particularly the visions of Mrs. White, are **sometimes misunderstood.** Some still seem to think that Adventists accept the Testimonies as a new Bible or as an addition to the Bible, though nothing could be farther from the truth. We accept the Holy Scriptures in full as divinely inspired and containing all the truth of God that is needed to make us wise unto salvation. We could easily copy a whole chapter of quotations from our strongest and earliest leaders in support of this statement. Elder James White wrote: {1947 LHC, FSG 61.1}

"THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT SHOULD ALL HAVE THEIR PROPER PLACES. THE BIBLE IS AN EVERLASTING ROCK. IT IS OUR RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE. *In it the man of God is 'thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' If every member of the church of Christ was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, and searched the Holy Scriptures diligently and with much prayer for duty, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, we think, they would be able to learn their whole duty in 'all good works.'* Thus 'the man of God may be perfect.' **But as the reverse exists,** and ever has existed, God in much mercy has pitied the weakness of his people, **and has set the gifts in the gospel church to correct our errors, and to lead us to His Living Word.** Paul says that they are for the 'perfecting of the saints,' 'till we all come in the unity of the faith.' **The extreme necessity of the church in its imperfect state is God's opportunity to manifest the gifts of the Spirit.** {1947 LHC, FSG 61.2}

"EVERY CHRISTIAN IS THEREFORE IN DUTY BOUND TO TAKE THE BIBLE AS A PERFECT RULE OF FAITH AND DUTY. He should pray fervently to be aided by the Holy Spirit in searching the Scriptures for the whole truth, and for his whole duty. **He is not at liberty to turn from them to learn his duty through any of the gifts. WE SAY THAT THE VERY MOMENT HE DOES, HE PLACES THE GIFTS IN THE WRONG PLACE, AND TAKES AN EXTREMELY DANGEROUS POSITION.** The

Word should be in front, and the eye of the church should be placed upon it, as the rule to walk by, and the fountain of wisdom, from which to learn duty in 'all good works.' But if a portion of the church err from the truths of the Bible, and become weak, and sickly, and the flock become scattered, so that it seems **necessary for God to employ the gifts of the Spirit to correct, revive and heal the erring, we should let him work.** Yea more, we should pray for him to work and plead earnestly that he would work by the Spirit's power and bring the scattered sheep to his fold. Praise the Lord, he will work. Amen."-Review and Herald, April 21, 1851, page 70. {1947 LHC, FSG 62.1}

G. I. Butler, many years president of the General Conference, wrote on the same subject as follows: {1947 LHC, FSG 62.2}

"We believe these visions because the Bible teaches them. We use the rules given in that holy book, and are forced to the conclusion that these manifestations are the work of the Spirit of God. Instead of our setting up these visions above and outside of the Scriptures as another rule of authority, as our opponents pretend, we claim that none can really take the Bible and fairly apply its teachings without accepting these visions as from God. The Bible is the supreme authority in deciding this as well as other questions. When it tells us to 'try the spirits,' to 'prove all things,' and 'hold fast that which is good.' It is our duty to do this. We find by so doing that these visions harmonize perfectly with the Scriptures." - Review and Herald, June 9, 1874, page 202. {1947 LHC, FSG 62.3}

The relation of the Spirit of prophecy to the Holy Scriptures is not a theory but a long and blessed experience with Adventists. **The Testimonies never lead away from the Bible. We are known as a church of Bible students.** It is a matter of record that our foreign missionaries sell and use more Bibles than do the missionaries of any other church. We do not understand that the gifts spoken of in the Scriptures were in any way to supersede the Bible. The work and the office of the Spirit of God in the church, that is, the manifestation of spiritual gifts, does not do away with the Word of God. The gifts lead to the Word and build on the Word. We believe, however, that the Scriptures teach that the gifts of the Spirit were not merely for the apostolic church but were to be found among God's people to the end of time, and especially in the remnant church at the close of time. These gifts are not given primarily for sinners. They are bestowed upon the church to build up, preserve, and guide the people of the Lord. {1947 LHC, FSG 62.4}

This brings us to the important question: How and by what means are the spiritual gifts to be tested? Some time ago, in the course of a meeting, I met a prominent doctor and scientist who claimed that the **prophetic gift should be tested by medical science.** Yet in his lecture that day the doctor stated that **medical science was constantly expanding and that medical books ten years old could not be considered reliable** in fact, must be given up. When I called his attention to that, he admitted that, of course, **medical science, which is constantly growing, developing, and even changing so that**

new textbooks must be written every ten years, could not possibly be the test for a divine gift. There have been those who claimed that the prophetic gift should be tested by the known facts of history. **That position, however, is most unsound.** All we know of history is what we find written in books or letters, in stone inscriptions, in government decrees or laws, and in literature generally. **But no one ever wrote everything that happened, and no one ever read everything that was written.** Further, no two thinkers on history **draw exactly the same conclusion from what they read.** The plain truth is that it takes as much inspiration to write perfect history as perfect prophecy; and anyway **no divine gift could be correctly tested by the fallible human knowledge of history.** {1947 LHC, FSG 63.1}

This question of testing the prophetic gift of Mrs. E. G. White is not a new one. The early pioneers and veterans in the Adventist Church, including James White, the first outstanding leader, invited every sincere seeker after truth to make a thorough investigation of this gift. **They never made faith in the writings of Mrs. White a test of church fellowship.** Mrs. White herself urged that this should not be done, and she willingly invited people to test the visions, saying that "**all should decide from the weight of evidence.**"-Testimonies, Volume 3, page 255.1. She made the claim with deep conviction that her revelations were "visions from God," and compared her teaching to that of the ancient prophets. She said: {1947 LHC, FSG 64.1}

"In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the **Testimonies of His Spirit.** There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will, and the course that He would have them pursue." - Testimonies, Volume 5, page 661. {1947 LHC, FSG 64.2}

Mrs. White's position was that no one could be consistent and say that although her books were informative and spiritually edifying, they were no different from books by Luther, Spurgeon, or other godly authors. **She claimed that her messages were of supernatural origin, that is, given her in vision:** {1947 LHC, FSG 64.3}

*"God is either teaching His church, reproofing their wrongs, and strengthening their faith, or He is not. This work is of God, or it is not. God does nothing in partnership with Satan. **My work bears the stamp of God, or the stamp of the enemy. There is no half way mark in the matter. The Testimonies are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil.**" - Testimonies, Volume 5, page 671. {1947 LHC, FSG 64.4}*

That this positive claim by Mrs. White was the only one possible, is self-evident when we remember her condition of body and mind during the visions in which she saw or heard the things she wrote. **Back in those years it was generally granted by all who knew her that it could not be otherwise.** Many years before he died J. N. Loughborough, a man of keen mind, wrote: {1947 LHC, FSG 64.5}

"I have seen Sister White in vision about fifty times. The first one I saw her have was at the close of a meeting, when she was well enough to take a long journey. Her last open vision was in 1884, on the camp ground at Portland, Oregon. She has visions at the present time, but they are not open visions in a public assembly. It is a heavenly place to be in, where there is an open vision, as some of those here who have seen her at such times, can testify. {1947 LHC, FSG 65.1}

"The first indication that she is about to be taken off in vision is that she loses all strength, like a person suddenly falling down. This state continues not more than five seconds, when she suddenly rises to her feet. She herself says that the first thing she knows an angel stands by her side and touches her and she receives strength. This is just as it was with Daniel. She has been examined while in vision, by skillful physicians, and we have testimonials from them which declare that the phenomena of her visions are beyond their comprehension. A remarkable evidence of the superhuman strength which Sister White has while in vision was given during her third vision, when she held on her arm a Bible eighteen inches long, eleven inches wide, and four inches thick, and weighing eighteen and a fourth pounds. It was published by Joseph Seale, of Boston, Mass., in 1822. This she held out at arm's length, her eyes meanwhile looking straight up, and her hand turning from text to text for more than half an hour, pointing to the texts with her finger and repeating them. I have conversed with those who examined every text as she pointed to them, and they testify that she repeated every one correctly. This was an indication that the power of God was connected with that work. {1947 LHC, FSG 65.2}

"At another time Sister White held this same kind of a Bible open in one hand, above her head, at an angle of forty five degrees, for half an hour, while she turned from text to text, and repeated the words to which she pointed. The spectators stood in chairs to examine the texts as she pointed to them. Some of them tried to hold a Bible in their hands at this angle, and could not do so, but the Bible in her hand seemed to be as firm as if the two had been glued together."-General Conference Bulletin, 1893, pages 19, 20. {1947 LHC, FSG 65.3}

Another witness writes: {1947 LHC, FSG 66.1}

"As one who has frequently observed her in vision, knowing the company of people usually present, all deeply observant and believers in her exercises, I have often wondered why a more vivid description of the scenes which transpired has not been given. {1947 LHC, FSG 66.2}

"In vision her eyes were open. There was no breath, but there were graceful movements of the shoulders, arms, and hands expressive of what she saw. It was impossible for anyone else to move her hands or arms. She often uttered words singly, and sometimes sentences which expressed to those about her the nature of the view she was having, either of heaven or earth. {1947 LHC, FSG 66.3}

"Her first word in vision was 'Glory,' sounding at first close by, and then dying away in the distance, seemingly far away. This was sometimes repeated. {1947 LHC, FSG 66.4}

"There was never an excitement among those present during a vision; nothing caused fear. It was a solemn, quiet scene, sometimes lasting an hour. {1947 LHC, FSG 66.5}

"When the vision was ended, and she lost sight of the heavenly light, as it were, coming back to the earth once more, she would exclaim with a long-drawn sigh, as she took her first natural breath, 'D-a-r-k.' She was then limp and without strength."-Martha Amadon, Notebook Leaflets, Miscellaneous Leaflet No. 2, quoted in Ministry, March, 1944, page 4. {1947 LHC, FSG 66.6}

When we speak of Mrs. White's messages as given by inspiration, we wish to stress two points. **First, it is well known that she did not employ a stenographer in her work, but she herself wrote by hand most of her many manuscripts. Some of these copybooks in her original handwriting are still with us, so that quite a bit of what is published under her name can be traced to her own hand.** Elder and Mrs. White exercised the greatest care in sending out the messages. At first her writings were often read to trustworthy brethren in the church and sent out with their recommendations. When some opponents tried to print them without her consent, there was danger that her writings would be changed and falsified. Thus Mrs. White inserted a note in our first paper, Present Truth, May, 1850, as follows: {1947 LHC, FSG 66.7}

"Eli Curtis-It is well known by many of the brethren, that Eli Curtis has published many of my visions. He has pursued such an inconsistent course for some time past; and his influence on the cause of truth is such at this time that I feel it my duty to say to the brethren that I have no faith in his course; and that he has published my visions contrary to my wishes, even after I had requested him not to publish them."-page 80. {1947 LHC, FSG 67.1}

The second point is that the printing of Mrs. White's writings has never been a commercial enterprise for gain. In the beginning they were given away free. In the Review of January 22, 1867, we have this note from Elder White: {1947 LHC, FSG 67.2}

"Testimonies to the church, No. 11. {1947 LHC, FSG 67.3}

*"This work will be ready in a few days. Address Elder James White, Battle Creek, Mich. **We print 2,000 copies which are free to all on the receipt of postage.** Those who choose to pay, can send ten cents a copy and postage, which is two cents a single copy, or by the quantity two cents for four ounces. And those who choose can send more than the above price to enable us to offer this Testimony without requiring a price."-page 84. {1947 LHC, FSG 67.4}*

Right from the beginning of the advent movement this subject of testing the prophetic gift was carefully studied, and clear answers were given as to why we believe Mrs. White was a

messenger sent from the Lord. We will quote here an example of what was written in those early years on that topic. In the official paper of our church, the Review, of March 31, 1891, we find the following questions and answers: {1947 LHC, FSG 67.5}

"J. M. Van Kirk, Ruffiven, Iowa, asks: {1947 LHC, FSG 67.6}

"1. Does the Seventh-day Adventist Church believe the so called "Testimonies" and writings of Mrs. E. G. White to be revelations from God? {1947 LHC, FSG 67.7}

"2. If the foregoing question be answered in the affirmative, then I inquire: Upon what grounds do you accept her writings to be revelations from God? {1947 LHC, FSG 68.1}

"3. Has Mrs. E. G. White ever performed any miracle in support of her claims? {1947 LHC, FSG 68.2}

"Answer: (1) **The Seventh-day Adventist Church regard the 'Testimonies' and writings of Sister White as having come through one of the 'gifts of the Spirit'** (1 Corinthians 12:1, 4, etc.; Ephesians 4:8, 11), which were especially 'set' in the church (1 Corinthians 12:28), and were to continue to the end. Acts 2:17-20; 1 Corinthians 1:6, 7. Among these gifts is the 'spirit of prophecy,' the operation of which is to bring a person fully under the influence of the Holy Spirit, that to such person are given, through 'open vision' (1 Samuel 3:1) or some equivalent operation, views of the spiritual world, revelations of the spiritual condition of the church or individuals, of present and future dangers and duties, and of things to come. John 16:13. This feature of the gifts, if we rightly apprehend certain prophecies, was to become especially prominent in the days which immediately precede the second advent of Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4, 19-23; Revelation 12:17; 19:10. **When one meets some manifestation of this kind which he believes to be a genuine operation of the Spirit of God, we leave any one to judge how far he must receive what comes in this manner to be a revelation from God.** {1947 LHC, FSG 68.3}

"(2.) The second question is quite fully answered in the foregoing. **We believe the writings of sister White to be a revelation from God, because we believe them to be one of the gifts above referred to. And we believe them to be one of the gifts, because they bear all the marks and characteristics which are set forth in the Scriptures by which a work of this kind is shown to be genuine.** When Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5:19, 20, says, 'Quench not the Spirit,' and 'Despise not prophesyings,' he adds, 'Prove all things' (that is, test all which claims to be the gift of prophecy by the work of the Spirit), and 'hold fast that which is good,' rejecting, of course, all manifestations which are false and bad, as we see them illustrated in Mormonism and modern Spiritualism, because these, although they show marks of the preternatural, all lead away from God and the Bible, and thus reveal their true character. (See Deuteronomy 13:1-3.) {1947 LHC, FSG 68.4}

"(3.) This question strikes us as betraying quite a misapprehension of the subject of the 'gifts.' Spiritual gifts do not appeal to the evidence of miracles in their support; for

one of the gifts themselves is the 'working of miracles.' In other words, the gifts are their own evidence. Suppose one has 'the gift of healing' (1 Corinthians 12:9), and God works through such an one to relieve a sufferer from infirmity and disease; would it not be a strange demand for some one then to ask him to work a miracle to prove that he had healed the person? The healing would be its own evidence. **So when one claims to have had revelations through the Spirit of God, the working of a miracle would not establish his claims, for there are false miracles; but we must judge of it by other evidences. We do not find that either Daniel or John ever worked a miracle to prove that any vision which they claimed to have, was genuine. In the case of the gift of prophecy, we look first at the character and position of the one who makes the claim; secondly, at the tendency of what is taught, that is, whether it leads to truth and purity, and the cultivation of the heavenly graces, or away from these things and away from God; and, thirdly, whether there is anything in what is already revealed, or in facts themselves, to contradict what is set forth. And if in all these respects it bears the test, then we believe it is to be received.**"-page 200. {1947 LHC, FSG 68.5}

The foregoing statement based on the Bible is so convincing that it cannot be overthrown. Now after years have passed by, however, not only do we have the Scriptural arguments in favor of the prophetic gift, but we have seen the fruitage of that work in nearly all the world, and applying the scripture, "By their fruits ye shall know them," we are convinced that the work of **Mrs. White was of the Lord. For Seventh-day Adventists this question is one of decisive importance. If the claim of Seventh-day Adventists that Mrs. White is a messenger from the Lord is true, then it follows that the Adventist Church is the people of God, through whom He is giving His message to mankind. If, on the other hand, the claim is false, then the Seventh-day Adventist Church cannot be the remnant church spoken of in the Bible but is a church greatly deceived.** {1947 LHC, FSG 69.1}

It may also be of interest to know how the early preachers in their debates defended their faith in this gift. S. N. Haskell, one of the veterans of this cause and a godly, broad-minded Bible student and advocate of the Spirit of prophecy among Seventh-day Adventists, told how he and others met the opposition of various denominations, especially the so-called first day Adventists, to the Spirit of prophecy. As an old war horse he loved to tell us how they presented the following propositions: {1947 LHC, FSG 69.2}

1. *We affirm that Seventh-day Adventists accept the Testimonies as from the Lord, because both in spirit and in teaching they are in complete harmony with the Bible.* {1947 LHC, FSG 70.1}
2. *We also affirm that if there is any doctrine or moral teaching in the Testimonies in addition to what is in the Bible or contrary to the Bible, we will reject them as you do.* {1947 LHC, FSG 70.2}

3. We further submit that if the Testimonies have nothing contrary to the Bible or any moral teaching additional to the Bible, and if in teaching and spirit they agree perfectly with the Bible, **then you must either reject the Bible when you reject the Testimonies or you must believe the Testimonies when you believe the Bible.** {1947 LHC, FSG 70.3}

Elder Haskell stated that he had never found anyone who was willing to challenge him on this fair proposition, because they were all unable to point to a single thing in the Spirit of prophecy that was out of harmony with the Word of God. **These propositions used by the veterans of the Adventist Church we still hold.** Even though we believe in the prophetic gift of Mrs. E. G. White, we are always willing at any time to submit that gift to the test of the Holy Scriptures. **The Spirit of prophecy among us stands or falls on its relation to the Word of God.** As long as no one can point to a single thing in the Spirit of prophecy that is out of harmony with the Word of God, **it must be admitted that it is impossible to believe in the Bible and not believe the Testimonies, which are in harmony with the Bible.** {1947 LHC, FSG 70.4}

At this point we wish to call attention to a compelling fact that must not be forgotten. There are special periods in the history of God's work on earth when a large number of divine prophecies meet their fulfillment. The return of Israel from the Babylonian captivity was such a time of prophetic fulfillment, and the days of John the Baptist and the early apostolic church were others. But notice with care that when we come to one of those periods in which many Bible predictions meet their fulfillment, it is God's plan that there should be a living prophet to help explain the writings of former prophets. Daniel in Babylon expounded the prophecies of Jeremiah in regard to the return of Israel from Babylon. (Daniel 9:14.) There were many living prophets in the early days of the Christian Era who set forth and expounded the writings of the former prophets. Of these we should mention John the Baptist, the apostles, and especially Christ. In the synagogue in Nazareth soon after His baptism, Christ, reading from the prophecy of Isaiah, said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Luke 4:21. And the apostle Peter in his great sermon at Pentecost declared, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" Acts 2:16. {1947 LHC, FSG 70.5}

Prophetic messengers are rare, especially in our day. Papal infallibility precludes the prophetic gift, and so do the Protestant creeds to a large extent. What Jeremiah and other prophets were to Israel before the Babylonian captivity and what Ezekiel meant to the people of God during the captivity, **the messenger of the Lord and the Spirit of prophecy have been and are to the Adventist people.** As the prophet Ezekiel encouraged, warned, and reproved the people of God and thus prepared them for the return to the Holy Land, **so the Spirit of prophecy has been used of God to prepare His people for the second advent.** {1947 LHC, FSG 71.1}

Beyond all question, the messenger of the Lord in the Adventist Church belongs especially to that church from its beginning to the end of this age. A few stress at times the difference between those who had experiences through personal acquaintance

with Mrs. White and those who had experiences only with the messages she left. **I happen to belong to both periods, and it is my settled conviction that the Spirit today than they were while the Lord's servant was still with us.** Those who have never had the privilege of seeing or hearing and knowing the messenger **have the same chance to test and apply the messages of the Spirit of prophecy as had the early believers in the Adventist Church.** The church today has the messages of the Spirit of prophecy just as surely as it had this instruction while the messenger of the Lord was living. Sometimes people claim that the Adventist Church no longer has the "testimony of Jesus," that is, the Spirit of prophecy, because the messenger is dead. That is a most superficial assertion. We have these messages as much today as we ever did. The personal counsel of Mrs. White was always helpful, but to think that the people in the early days of the church while she was living had great advantages over us as teachers or ministers in later years is a decided mistake. The value of these prophetic messages does not depend on a living person but on the faithfulness with which they are studied and followed. **These messages from the Lord are just as true when the messenger is dead as they were when she was alive.** {1947 LHC, FSG 71.2}

Though I could easily have done so, I never sought an interview with Mrs. White. Sometimes interviewers reported her as saying what she never said. Then, too, she herself never encouraged people to go to her. She wrote: {1947 LHC, FSG 72.1}

"In the vision given me June 12, 1868, I was shown the danger of the people of God in looking to Bro. and Sister White, and thinking that they must come to them with their burdens, and seek counsel of them. This ought not so to be. They are invited by their compassionate, loving Savior, to come unto Him, when weary and heavy laden, and He will relieve them. In Him they will find rest. {1947 LHC, FSG 72.2}

When in their distress they feel the relief which is found alone in Jesus, they obtain an experience which is of the highest value to them."-Testimonies, Volume 2, pages 118, 119. {1947 LHC, FSG 72.3}

Our early pioneers constantly urged us to read and live with the messages themselves and to make an index for our own use of the special lessons or points that we found particularly helpful and suggestive. They stressed something that is often forgotten today, that is, what they called the spirit or influence of the messages. They also taught that the prosperity of the advent movement in the days to come would be largely decided by our relation to this light from the Lord, and they loved to quote the words, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper." 2 Chronicles 20:20. {1947 LHC, FSG 73.1}

Before the Savior left, He told His disciples, who sorrowed at the thought of His departing, that it was well for them that He went away, because, taught by the Spirit of God, they would appreciate Him and His teachings even more when His bodily presence was not with them. We are in a somewhat similar position today. It was a joyful experience to know Mrs. White, but there is a deeper, more glorious victory in believing and practicing her

messages. This is one reason why Adventists today stand firmer than ever before in the faith that the Testimonies are of God. {1947 LHC, FSG 73.2}

Lewis Harrison Christian

The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts

DEAR BRO. WHITE: - I am requested to write a word to you respecting the state of general feeling in our Churches as to some expressions made a different times in the Review from your pen respecting the Visions given for the aid of the Church. **They feel that by your expressions you have placed a less estimate upon them than the Churches here have, and it has thus brought in some lack of confidence and trials in many minds.** They wish you would take the subject into consideration, and if duty demands, make some apology through the Review, that shall be a relief to their minds. Many have been anxiously awaiting such an article from your pen for some time. By your thus doing, you will relieve many an oppressed mind who feels that **GOD'S MANIFESTATIONS OF FAVOR ARE A TEST FOR HIS CHILDREN.** {February 14, 1856 JWe, ARSH 158.1}

Your brother still striving for life in the coming Kingdom. HIRAM BINGHAM.

NOTE. - I gladly embrace this opportunity to express my views of this matter, hoping it will relieve the minds of the Brethren in Vermont and elsewhere, I should have spoken out on this subject before; but I supposed the fact being known that I was in union with the "Address of the Conference" published in No. 10, and my relation to the instrument of the Lord's choice, were a sufficient excuse for my silence. **My position has been one of trial.** The relations I have sustained to the work in the rise and progress of the cause of present truth, have exposed me to a thousand thrusts from those who were opposed to the work. {February 14, 1856 JWe, ARSH 158.3}

I have ever been slow to speak of Mrs. White's visions in a public manner; but in consequence of the almost utter silence of those who should have spoken fit words in season, I have felt compelled to speak. And if I have spoken in a manner that has given the idea that I **lightly esteemed them,** it has not "resulted from an unwillingness to bear the cross of Christ." It has been in reference to the welfare of the cause that I have spoken and acted, notwithstanding all my errors. **IN REGARD TO THE VISIONS BEING A TEST,** I confess that I have spoken without fully expressing myself; and if Bro. B. had pointed out the expressions he merely refers to, I should now be able to give a more definite reply. {February 14, 1856 JWe, ARSH 158.4}

IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT WE HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH TESTING ALL MEN BY THE VISIONS, AND OF MAKING THEM THE RULE OF OUR FAITH. THIS IS A BOLD UNTRUTH, OF WHICH THOSE WHO UTTERED IT WERE NOT IGNORANT. THIS I HAVE DENIED, AND DENY IT STILL. But there need not be so much blind-fold stumbling over this matter. **TO SAY UNQUALIFIEDLY THAT THEY ARE A TEST, AND CARRY OUT THE PRINCIPLE WITH THOSE WHO KNOW NOTHING OF THEIR TEACHINGS, SPIRIT AND FRUIT, AT THIS TIME WHEN THE WORLD IS FULL OF MANIFESTATIONS AS NEAR THE GENUINE AS SATAN CAN GET UP, WOULD BE THE WILDEST FANATICISM.** On the other hand for those who profess to believe them to say they will in **NO WISE BE TESTED**

BY THEM, IS MOST IRRATIONAL. I still say that the Bible is my rule of faith and practice, and in saying this, **I DO NOT REJECT THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ITS DIVERSITIES OF OPERATIONS.** If any refer to an expression in a published extract of a letter written to a brother in the West, **I would say that that related to those who know but little of the visions save by false reports. I believe them to be the property of the church, and a test to those who believe them from Heaven.** {February 14, 1856 JWe, ARSH 158.5}

Let those who regard it as their duty, speak out as to their character, spirit and influence; **while silence will better become me in regard to them. As to the perpetuity of the gifts I shall speak as God gives me utterance.** {February 14, 1856 JWe, ARSH 158.6}

JAMES WHITE

God has a particular object in placing these spiritual gifts in the church. They are to preserve His people from fanaticism and error and to correct wrongs and expose sin. Through the Bible the Lord uses these gifts as means by which He teaches His people when they are in danger of taking a wrong step. By them the Spirit of God sheds light upon church difficulties and helps to adjust things that otherwise would be impossible. **The spiritual gifts cause light to shine out upon His people when they are in danger of going astray.** The Spirit brings in unity and preserves God's children from strife and division. In one word, we may say the purpose of the spiritual gifts is to keep the people of God in the faith so that they may be of one mind and one judgment concerning the Scriptures. Human discernment alone cannot search out hidden iniquity or adjust dark and complicated situations or preserve from error. Many churches have adopted creeds to help them preserve the faith. **God's plan is that, instead of a creed, the church should have the divine gifts, especially the gift of prophecy, and thus prevent this conflicting interpretation of the Scriptures. It would be sad indeed if God could not at this late and dangerous day converse with His people.** {1947 LHC, FSG 13.1}

TO THE FOREGOING, HOWEVER, WE WOULD ADD THAT THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT BELONG PRIMARILY TO THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH. SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS CLAIM TO HAVE THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT IN THEIR CHURCH, ESPECIALLY THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY. BUT WE RECOGNIZE THAT GOD'S CHILDREN SHOULD NOT TEST THE WORLD IN ANY MANNER BY DEMANDING A BELIEF IN SPIRITUAL GIFTS. Nor do we in our intercourse with various religious parties who are striving to walk in the Spirit of God **make these gifts a test of Christian character. We do not urge upon nonmembers an acceptance of these manifestations of the Spirit of God, nor do we test them by their teachings.** {1947 LHC, FSG 13.2}

Camp meetings in the Western States were to be held in Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, beginning in late May and running to early July. James White announced that he and Ellen planned to attend some of them (RH, May 23, 1871). They began their work with the Iowa meeting at Knoxville. Attendance was good, but they there learned from Canright and Littlejohn of the divisive **attitudes of a number who attended the Missouri meeting.** As the result of the deceptive work of Mr. Goodenough and Mr. Carver, quite a group **opposed Ellen White and the visions.** James White, as he wrote of the

situation, pointed out that Seventh-day Adventists “**believe that the Spirit of Prophecy has rested on Mrs. White, and that she is called to do a special work at this time among this people.**” He pointed out: {2BIO 320.3}

THEY DO NOT, HOWEVER, MAKE A BELIEF IN THIS WORK A TEST OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP. BUT AFTER MEN AND WOMEN HAVE HAD EVIDENCE THAT THE WORK IS OF GOD, AND THEN JOIN HANDS WITH THOSE WHO FIGHT AGAINST IT, OUR PEOPLE CLAIM THE RIGHT TO SEPARATE FROM SUCH, THAT THEY MAY ENJOY THEIR SENTIMENTS IN PEACE AND QUIET. —RH, June 13, 1871. {2BIO 320.4}

Relation to Church Fellowship

By Francis M. Wilcox [F. M. Wilcox was Editor of the Review and Herald and might be considered a “Church Statesman.” He was one of the five men appointed by Ellen White as Trustees to care for her Writings.]

As we consider the subject of spiritual gifts and their manifestation in the church, the question naturally arises, **SHOULD FAITH IN THIS DOCTRINE BE MADE A TEST OF CHURCH FELLOWSHIP?** {2BIO 491.1}

Those seeking membership in the church should be carefully instructed **in all the truths of the gospel.** They should know, first of all, that Christ is their Saviour and that their sins have been washed away in the blood shed on calvary. **They should be taught that the test of faith and love is found in obedience to the divine requirements,** but that the law of God can be expressed in the life only as it is written in the heart by the operation of the spirit in the New Covenant relationship. They should be instructed in the evidences of Christ’s soon coming, and in the prophecies pointing out last-day world conditions and the special work to be done in the preparation of a people to stand in the day of the Lord. {2BIO 491.2}

Candidates for church membership should be taught to realize that they are not their own, but Christ’s, and therefore they should honor him in their bodies, his temples, by wearing proper attire, and providing such food and drink as make for strength and not for drunkenness; and that their lives and property should be placed upon the altar of sacrificial service for others as the spirit shall indicate. **They should be instructed in Church Organization and polity, in the historical development of this movement, in the doctrine of spiritual gifts, and especially the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy, which heaven has used so largely in fostering the work of this movement.** Particularly should they be taught that these **gifts answer to the word of prophecy in their manifestation in the remnant church.** {2BIO 491.3}

Inasmuch as the labors of Mrs. E. G. White have entered so largely into the development of the second advent movement, **candidates for church membership should be made acquainted with the divine ministry to which she was called, and the influence of her labors and writings through the years.** Opportunity should be **afforded them to read**

her published books. When this instruction has been given candidates, **but little question ever will be raised as to faith in the doctrine of spiritual gifts being made a test of church fellowship.** {2BIO 492.1}

If, as the result of this investigation, the one contemplating church membership arrives at settled convictions in opposition to this doctrine, **HE NATURALLY WILL NOT WISH TO UNITE HIS INTERESTS WITH A CHURCH THAT HOLDS IT AS A PART OF ITS RELIGIOUS FAITH.** In any event he should be encouraged to wait until he has had time and opportunity for **MORE MATURE STUDY OF THE QUESTION.** {2BIO 492.2}

If, on the other hand, while in full sympathy with his adventist brethren regarding their faith and objectives and their church polity and organization, he still feels doubts over the doctrine of spiritual gifts and their exercise in the church, **BUT HAS NO OPPOSITION TO THE FULLEST AND FREEST EXERCISE OF FAITH IN THESE GIFTS ON THE PART OF HIS BRETHREN, AND TO THE FREE USE OF THE INSTRUCTION WHICH HAS COME TO THE CHURCH FROM THE GIFT OF PROPHECY, HE NEED NOT NECESSARILY BE EXCLUDED FROM CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.** {2BIO 492.3}

Elder J. N. Andrews records the attitude of the church on this matter in these words:

In the reception of members into our churches, we desire on this subject to know two things: (1) that they believe the bible doctrine of spiritual gifts; (2) **THAT THEY WILL CANDIDLY ACQUAINT THEMSELVES WITH THE VISIONS OF SISTER WHITE, WHICH HAVE EVER HELD SO PROMINENT PLACE IN THIS WORK. WE BELIEVE THAT EVERY PERSON STANDING THUS AND CARRYING OUT THIS PURPOSE WILL BE GUIDED IN THE WAY OF TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. AND THOSE WHO OCCUPY THE GROUND ARE NEVER DENIED ALL THE TIME THEY DESIRE TO DECIDE IN THIS MATTER.** —RH, Feb. 15, 1870. {2BIO 492.5}

Spiritual Gift and Church Membership - The testimony of early leaders

James White testifies:

They [seventh-day Adventists] believe in the perpetuity of spiritual gifts. They believe that the spirit of prophecy has rested upon Mrs. White, and that she is called to do a special work at this time, among this people. **THEY DO NOT, HOWEVER, MAKE A BELIEF IN THIS WORK A TEST OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.** But, after men and women have had evidence that the work is of god, and then join hands with those who fight against it, our people claim the right to separate from such, that they may enjoy their sentiments in peace and quiet. —RH, June 13, 1871. {2BIO 493.4}

On this point, Elder J. N. Andrews writes:

WE THEREFORE DO NOT TEST THE WORLD IN ANY MANNER BY THESE GIFTS. Nor do we, in our intercourse with other religious bodies who are striving to walk in the fear of

god, in any way make these a test of Christian character. Upon none of these persons do we urge these manifestations of the spirit of god, nor test them by their teaching. {2BIO 493.5}

There is such a thing, however, as men having in the providence of god an opportunity to become acquainted with the special work of the spirit of god, so that they shall acknowledge that their light is clear, convincing, and satisfactory. **TO SUCH PERSONS, WE CONSIDER THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT CLEARLY A TEST.** Not only has god spoken, but they have had opportunity to ascertain that fact, and to know it for themselves. **IN ALL SUCH CASES, SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE MANIFESTLY A TEST THAT CANNOT BE DISREGARDED EXCEPT AT THE PERIL OF ETERNAL RUIN.** —RH, Feb. 15, 1870. {2BIO 494.1}

Disfellowshipping members

Q. - Upon what ground were unbelievers in the **Testimonies disfellowshipped**? {1907 JNL, COOD 168.2}

A. - **This question has reference to those who make war on those who believe the Testimonies.** The instruction in these cases is given in the writings themselves. See "Testimonies for the Church," Vol. I, pages 228, 229, 382. On pages 250, and 251 of the same volume is reference to a case which, if the laborer had patiently waited for a few weeks, the man spoken of was violating the Sabbath, and might have been excluded from the church for that offense. {1907 JNL, COOD 168.3}

In the last vision given at Battle Creek I was shown that an **unwise course was taken** at---in regard to the visions at the time of the **organization of the church there.** There were some in-----**who were God's children, and yet doubted the visions.** Others had no opposition, **yet dared not take a decided stand in regard to them.** Some were skeptical, and they had sufficient cause to make them so. The false visions and fanatical exercises, and the wretched fruits following, had an influence upon the cause in Wisconsin to make **minds jealous of everything bearing the name of visions.** All these things should have been **taken into consideration, and wisdom exercised.** There **SHOULD BE NO TRIAL OR LABOR WITH THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER SEEN THE INDIVIDUAL HAVING VISIONS, AND WHO HAVE HAD NO PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE VISIONS.** Such should **not be deprived of the benefits and privileges of the church, if their Christian course is otherwise correct, and they have formed a good Christian character.** {1T 327.3}

Some, I was shown, could receive the published visions, judging of the tree by its fruits. **Others are like doubting Thomas; they cannot believe the published Testimonies, nor receive evidence through the testimony of others; but must see and have the evidence for themselves.** Such must not be set aside, but **LONG PATIENCE AND BROTHERLY LOVE SHOULD BE EXERCISED TOWARD THEM UNTIL THEY FIND THEIR POSITION AND BECOME ESTABLISHED FOR OR AGAINST.** If they fight against the

visions, of which they have no knowledge; **if they carry their opposition so far as to oppose that in which they have had no experience**, and feel annoyed when those who believe that the visions are of God speak of them in meeting, and comfort themselves with the instruction given through vision, the **church may know that they are not right**. God's people **should not cringe and yield, and give up their liberty to such disaffected ones**. God has placed the gifts in the church that the church may be benefited by them; and **when professed believers in the truth oppose these gifts, and fight against the visions, souls are in danger through their influence, and it is time then to labor with them, that the weak may not be led astray by their influence**. {1T 328.1}

- ***It has been very hard for the servants of God to labor in -----, for there has been a class of self-righteous, talkative, unruly ones there, who have stood in the way of the work of God. If received into the church, they would tear it to pieces. They would not be subject to the body, and would never be satisfied unless the reins of church government were in their own hands. {1T 329.1}***
- ***Brother G sought to move with great caution. He knew that the class who opposed the visions were wrong, that they were not genuine believers in the truth; and therefore, to shake off these clogs, he proposed to receive none into the church who did not believe the third angel's message and the visions. This kept out some few precious souls who had not fought against the visions. They dared not unite with the church, fearing that they should commit themselves upon that which they did not understand and fully believe. And there were those at hand ready to prejudice these conscientious ones, and to place matters before them in the worst possible light. Some have felt grieved and offended because of the condition of membership, and since the organization their feelings of dissatisfaction have greatly increased. Strong prejudice has governed them. {1T 329.2}***

I was shown the case of Sister H. She was presented before me in connection with a professed sister who was strongly prejudiced against my husband and myself, and opposed to the visions. This spirit had led her to love and cherish every lying report in regard to us and the visions, and she has communicated this to Sister H. She has had a bitter spirit of war against me, when she had no personal knowledge of me. She was unacquainted with my labors, yet has nourished the most wicked feelings of prejudice against me, and has influenced Sister H, and they have united together in their bitter remarks and speeches. The person shown me in connection with Sister H was a strong-minded woman, sanguine, and exalted in her own estimation. She has thought that her views were correct, and that others must rely upon her word, when she only darkened counsel by words, and manifested the spirit of the dragon host to war against those who would be united on the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. {1T 329.3}

Since Sister H has been at-----, she has despised the visions, and has related hearsay reports, as though she knew that they were true. She has resisted no influence calculated to injure me. She did not know but that the visions were of God; she had no personal

acquaintance with the humble instrument; and yet she has united with unconsecrated ones in-----to exert a strong influence against me. They have strengthened one another by loving and reporting false stories coming from different sources, and in this way have nourished their prejudice. **There can be no union between their spirit and the spirit of the messages which the Lord sees fit to give for the benefit of His humble people. The spirit which dwells in their hearts cannot harmonize with the light given of God.** {1T 330.1}

Many poor souls do not know what they are doing. They unite their influence with Satan's forces, and aid him in his work. They manifest great zeal and earnestness in their blind opposition, as though they were verily doing God's service by fighting against the visions. All who desire to do so can acquaint themselves with the fruits of these visions. For seventeen years God has seen fit to let them survive and strengthen against the opposition of Satan's forces, and the influence of human agencies that have aided Satan in his work. {1T 330.2}

I have been shown that some, especially in Iowa, make the visions a rule by which to measure all, and have taken a course which my husband and myself have never pursued. Some are unacquainted with me and my labors, and they are very skeptical of anything bearing the name of visions. This is all natural, and can be overcome only by experience. **If persons are not settled in regard to the visions, they should not be crowded off.** The course to pursue with such may be found in Testimony No. 8, pp. 328, 329 [**AS QUOTED ABOVE**], which I hope will be read by all. **Ministers should have compassion of some, making a difference;** others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire. God's ministers should have wisdom to give to everyone his portion of meat and to make that difference with **different persons which their cases require.** **The course pursued with some in Iowa who are unacquainted with me has not been careful and consistent. Those who were, comparatively, strangers to the visions have been dealt with in the same manner as those who have had much light and experience in the visions. Some have been required to endorse the visions when they could not conscientiously do so, and in this way some honest souls have been driven to take positions against the visions and against the body which they never would have taken had their cases been managed with discretion and mercy.** {1T 382.1}

- ***Some of our brethren have had long experience in the truth and have for years been acquainted with me and with the influence of the visions. They have tested the truthfulness of these testimonies and asserted their belief in them. They have felt the powerful influence of the Spirit of God resting upon them to witness to the truthfulness of the visions. If such, when reproved through vision, rise up against them, and work secretly to injure our influence, they should be faithfully dealt with, for their influence is endangering those who lack experience.*** {1T 382.2}

IN THE PRACTICE OF THE CHURCH IT HAS NOT BEEN CUSTOMARY TO DISFELLOWSHIP ONE BECAUSE HE DID NOT RECOGNIZE THE DOCTRINE OF

SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE CHURCH, PARTICULARLY THE GIFT OF PROPHECY AS REPRESENTED IN THE WORK OF MRS. WHITE. However, if one should develop unbelief, and begin to oppose the position held by the church on the subject of spiritual gifts, the church **has considered it necessary to labor for such members the same as they would in the cases of those who opposed any other doctrine held by the church.** They have justly become subjects for labor, not because of their lack of faith in the spirit of prophecy, but **because of their spirit of opposition to a cherished faith held by the church.** {2BIO 494.3}

Uriah Smith:

But I have not believed, as past volumes of the *Review* will testify, that these, or any other manifestation of spiritual gifts, stood on a level with the Scriptures, **OR THAT THEY SHOULD BE MADE A TEST OF FELLOWSHIP.** I see as yet no occasion to change my views in any of these respects. -RH Supplement, Aug. 14, 1883.

George I. Butler:

Our enemies try very hard to make it appear that we make **THE VISIONS A TEST OF FELLOWSHIP. OUR LEADING MEN HAVE NEVER DONE THIS, AND THE VISIONS THEMSELVES TEACH THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE DONE. NO; WE DO NOT MAKE THE VISIONS A TEST, AND NEVER HAVE.** But we do claim the right to believe them, to talk about them freely, and to **read them in private and in public,** and shall no doubt continue to exercise that right, regardless of the spite of those who hate us. -"The Visions: How Are They Held Among S.D. Adventists," RH Supplement, Aug. 14, 1883.

Francis M. Wilcox:

IN THE PRACTICE OF THE CHURCH IT HAS NOT BEEN CUSTOMARY TO DISFELLOWSHIP ONE BECAUSE HE DID NOT RECOGNIZE THE DOCTRINE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS. A member of the church should not be excluded from membership because of his inability to recognize clearly the doctrine of spiritual gifts and its application to the second advent movement. -*The Testimony of Jesus* [RH, 1944], pp. 141-43, taken from Chapter 17: "Relation to Church Fellowship," pp. 136-43.

Conclusion

1. It is unequivocally clear that all of the pioneers of the SDA Church—including EGW herself—held that belief in her prophetic gift should *not* be made a test of fellowship.
2. The pioneers did take the position that there *were* two Biblical doctrines, belief in which *did* constitute a test of fellowship:

In public labor do not make prominent, and quote that which Sister White has written, as authority to sustain your positions. To do this will not increase faith in the testimonies. Bring your evidences, clear and plain, from the Word of God. A "Thus saith the Lord" is the strongest testimony you can possibly present to the people. Let none be

educated to look to Sister White, but to the mighty God, who gives instruction to Sister White. - Letter 11, 1894. [3SM 29.3]

If you differ with your brethren as to your understanding of the grace of Christ and the operations of His Spirit, you should not make these differences prominent. You view the matter from one point; another, just as devoted to God, views the same question from another point, and speaks of the things that make the deepest impression on his mind; another viewing it from a still different point, presents another phase; and how foolish it is to get into contention over these things, when there is really nothing to contend about. Let God work on the mind and impress the heart. {1SM 183.1}

God has been pleased to give you line upon line and precept upon precept. But there are not many of you that really know what is contained in the Testimonies. 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. {5T 664.3}

"Regarding the testimonies, nothing is ignored; nothing is cast aside; but time and place must be considered. **Nothing must be done untimely.** Some matters must be withheld because some persons would make an improper use of the light given. Every jot and tittle is essential and must appear at an opportune time. In the past, the testimonies were carefully prepared before they were sent out for publication. And all matter is still carefully studied after the first writing. {PH116 25a.1}

But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority - not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in its support. GC 595.1

May God help you all and help me. I want help and strength and power. But do not quote Sister White till you stand on vantage ground, where you know what you are doing. Take the word of God. It is full of meat and drink. Study the Bible, and you will know more of God than you do now. You will have something fresh to impart to others. You will not go over the same ground again and again. You will realize that there is a world to save. I ask you to put on the whole armor, and be sure that your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. - Manuscript 43, 1901, 12 - 19. (Talk in Battle Creek College Library, April 1, 1901.)

How can the Lord bless those who manifest a spirit of "I don't care," a spirit which leads them to walk contrary to the light which the Lord has given them? But I do not ask you to take my words. **Lay Sister White to one side. Do not quote my words again as long as you live until you can obey the Bible. Ellen White was meeting the leaders of the church as a group for the first time in ten years.** Situations in both the General Conference and in our Battle Creek - based institutions had in many cases reached a low ebb. Testimonies calling for a return to Bible principles had been received, theoretically, but no real improvement had taken place. 3SM 33

But here is the Word, the precious Word, exalted before you today. And don't you give a rap any more what "Sister White said" - "Sister White said this," and "Sister White said that," and "Sister White said the other thing." But say, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel," and then you do just what the Lord God of Israel does, and what he says. [SpM 167.2]

But don't you quote Sister White. I don't want you ever to quote Sister White until you get your vantage ground where you know where you are. Quote the Bible. Talk the Bible. It is full of meat, full of fatness. Carry it right out in your life, and you will know more Bible than you know now. You will have fresh matter - O, you will have precious matter; you won't be going over and over the same ground, and you will see a world saved. You will see souls for whom Christ has died. And I ask you to put on the armor, every piece of it, and be sure that your feet are shod with the preparation of the Gospel. [SpM 174]

Now here is the way the matter is represented; but when there is "I do not care," and going right contrary to the light that God has given in His Word - I do not ask you to take my word; I do not ask you to do it; lay Sister White right to one side; you lay her right to one side. Do you not - never quote my words again as long as you live, until you can obey the Bible. When you take the Bible and make that, make that your food, your meat, and your drink, and make that the elements of your character - when you can do that, then you will know better how to receive some counsel from God. But here the Word, the precious Word, I exalt it before you today; and do not go and repeat any more what Sister White said - **"Sister White said this," and "Sister White said that," and "Sister White said the other thing;" you say, "What saith the Lord God of Israel?" and then you do just what the Lord God of Israel does and what He says. Christ says: "I do the works of my Father; the works that I see him do, I do."** John 5:19. (Ms43d-1901.22)

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difference; others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire. God's ministers should have wisdom to give to everyone his portion of meat and to make that difference with different persons which their cases require. The course pursued with some in Iowa who are unacquainted with me has not been careful and consistent. Those who were, comparatively, strangers to the visions have been dealt with in the same manner as those who have had much light and experience in the visions. Some have been required to endorse the visions when they could not conscientiously do so, and in this way some honest souls have been driven to take positions against the visions and against the body which they never would have taken had their cases been managed with discretion and mercy. {1T 382.1}

Notice this important part:

"Ministers should have compassion of some, making a difference; others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire. God's ministers should have wisdom to give to everyone his portion of meat, and to make that difference with different persons which their cases require."

The pioneers did not and Sr. White said herself it was not to be a test, yet it is one of the pillars of our faith. It seems like a delicate issue. **It should maybe/certainly be a requirement for people to be recognized as ministers and elders though.** So, we need to accept this counsel and if GOD would ever want it to be a test, then He would have to reveal it to us.

God bless you