

Questions About What Seventh-Day Adventists mean by the term "Lesser Light"

By Pastor Ed Anderson

What do 7th-day Adventists mean by the term "Lesser Light"?

Answer:

Excellent question.

The term "**Lesser Light**" is often used in **Seventh-day Adventist** theology to describe the role of **Ellen G. White** in relation to **Scripture**, especially her prophetic writings. The phrase itself originates from **Ellen White's own description** of her ministry.

What Does "Lesser Light" Mean?

Ellen White wrote:

"Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light." — *Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, Jan. 20, 1903*

In this context:

- **Greater Light** = The **Holy Scriptures**, the **Word of God**, the final and supreme authority in all matters of faith and doctrine.
- **Lesser Light** = The **prophetic gift** given to Ellen White, **not to replace the Bible**, but to **point people back to it**, clarify it, and call attention to its teachings.

What It Does Not Mean

It **does not mean** that Ellen White's writings are unimportant, uninspired, or merely personal opinions. Instead, Adventists believe her writings are the **product of the same Spirit of Prophecy** that inspired biblical prophets — but **not part of the biblical canon**.

Just as the moon reflects the sun's light, Ellen White's writings are seen as **reflections** of God's truth, pointing people back to the "sunlight" of Scripture.

Biblical Basis for the Principle

Seventh-day Adventists affirm that:

- The Bible is the **sole rule of faith** (2 Timothy 3:16–17; Isaiah 8:20)
- Prophetic gifts continue in the **last days** (Joel 2:28–29; Revelation 12:17; Revelation 19:10)

Therefore, if someone is truly guided by the Holy Spirit, their work will **harmonize with and exalt Scripture**, not contradict or replace it.

Application in the Church

- Ellen White’s writings are **used for instruction, correction, encouragement, and reproof**, much like the biblical prophets were for ancient Israel.
- The Adventist Church officially states that **her writings are authoritative but always subject to the Bible**.

Analogy: The Telescope and the Stars

Imagine the Bible is the **night sky full of stars**. Ellen White’s writings are like a **telescope** — they don’t create new stars but help you **see the existing stars more clearly**.

Final Word

“Cling to your Bible, as it reads, and stop your criticism in regard to its validity... Obey the Word, and not one of you will be lost.” — *Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 18*

In summary, **“lesser light”** is a **supportive, prophetic role** meant to shine light on the **unchanging truths of Scripture**, especially relevant in times of confusion and end-time deception.