

Questions About Ellen White as the “Lesser Light”

By Pastor Ed Anderson

Greater Light...Lesser Light...this to me is very problematic, her (Ellen White) writings are held in such high regard that it would seem to me that her writings should be included in the Bible...what other conclusion is there?

Answer:

Your concern is both thoughtful and shared by many who take the Bible seriously and want to uphold its unique authority. The terms “**Greater Light**” and “**Lesser Light**” come from a specific framework of how Seventh-day Adventists view the role of **Ellen G. White’s writings** in relation to **Scripture**. Let’s break it down clearly.

1. Where the Phrase “Lesser Light” Comes From

Ellen White herself 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.”

— *Review and Herald*, January 20, 1903

In this metaphor:

- The **Bible** is the “**Greater Light**” — the full, authoritative Word of God.
- Her writings are the “**Lesser Light**” — not to replace or eclipse the Bible, but to point people back to it.

Think of it like the moon reflecting the sun’s light:

The moon doesn’t produce its own light — it reflects the sun’s light. In the same way, she saw her writings as **reflecting and amplifying the light of Scripture**, not adding new doctrine.

2. What Adventists Actually Believe About Her Writings

The official Seventh-day Adventist belief is:

“Her writings speak with prophetic authority, and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.”

— *Fundamental Belief #18: The Gift of Prophecy*

So, while her writings are deeply valued, **they are not considered equal to Scripture**. Here’s the hierarchy:

- **Bible = Sole foundation of faith.**
- **Ellen White’s writings = prophetic gift to support, not replace, the Bible.**

3. Why Not Include Her in the Bible Canon?

There are clear reasons:

- The **biblical canon is closed**. Revelation 22:18–19 warns against adding to it.
- True prophets outside of Scripture existed (like Agabus in Acts 11:28), but their writings weren’t included in the Bible.
- Her own testimony **never** claimed that her writings were equal to the Bible or should be added to it.

4. Why It Feels Problematic to Some

You’re not alone in sensing tension here. Some reasons include:

- Over-reliance by some believers on her quotes instead of Scripture.
- Quoting her to **end debates**, rather than encouraging people to study the Bible for themselves.
- Treating her writings like **a new legal code**, rather than a spiritual guide.

But this isn’t what she intended. She constantly urged people to **study the Bible for themselves**:

“I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice... The Word of God is sufficient to enlighten the most beclouded mind.”

— *Early Writings*, p. 78

5. A Balanced View

Ellen White's own stance:

“The Testimonies are not to belittle the Word of God, but to exalt it and attract minds to it.”

— *Testimonies, vol. 5*, p. 665

So the “lesser light” was not meant to outshine the Bible — only to help people find it again.

In Summary

Topic	Bible (Greater Light)	Ellen White (Lesser Light)
Origin	Divine inspiration	Claimed prophetic inspiration
Authority	Ultimate and final	Subordinate and supportive
Purpose	Universal and timeless	Specific for end-time church
Role	Foundation of all doctrine	Guidance and correction to uplift Bible
Canonicity	Closed canon	Not part of canon

If you've seen the misuse or over-exaltation of Ellen White's writings, you're not alone — even many Adventist leaders have warned against this. But when her writings are rightly used — as a prophetic voice calling people back to Jesus and the Word — they become a blessing, not a replacement.