

**GIVE Attendance TO Reading—**  
**Guidelines in the field of books and reading,**  
**studies based on the writings of Ellen G. White**  
by  
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Give ATTENDANCE To READING

Errata

Page

- 51. Line 8 from bottom, phrases for "phrases."
- 74. Line 2 from bottom should come after line 2 of paragraph 3.
- 75. Line 8 from bottom, He wrote to for "He went to Washington"
- 78. Line 1 of paragraph 5, her for "here."
- 79. Line 4 of paragraph 2, insert In principle, before "It topples."
- 87. Line 9 of paragraph 2, may for "man."
- 103. Line 15, indelible, for "indellible."
- 104. Paragraph 6, sensuous, for "sensous."

The words "Give attendance to reading" invited Timothy (I Tim. 4:13) to the joys of discovering hidden treasures. They pointed out the path to growth and undreamed of possibilities. Although they include reading the Bible in church services, yet the words apply to secular reading as well, and they address all Christians in all ages (ML 89). The appeal to read, then, has to do with mental culture as a principle of the Christian life. Our faculties are to be kept alert and keen, ready "to give an answer to every man that asketh" a reason for our hope (I Peter 3:15).

If "Give attendance to reading" were the only directive on the subject, Christians might feel free to read anything. But protective limitations have been provided, facilitating guidelines, issued by the same high authority. Each of the imperatives "read" and "avoid" has a purpose equally constructive and loving, namely, solicitude for our well being and happiness (SD 53, MH 114).

Directional and warning notices are strategically placed to make safe journeys possible. With a "thousand ways" to allure and beguile, Satan is busy preparing more bewildering sophistries. His power to deceive, we are told, has increased tenfold since apostolic days (2SG 277). What cause for gratitude, then, that a well-signed highway has been prepared!

It seems clear that the counsels on books and reading from the Spirit of Prophecy are given to draw a line between good and bad, between suitable

reading matter and unsuitable, and to give guidance and warning that are needed. They are marked by a sense of urgency, as having to do with an important matter where there is grave and subtle danger. "As I can see the danger that threatens the youth from improper reading, I cannot forbear to present still further the warnings given me in regard to this great evil." 7T 203.

See also FE 164. (In this study, all emphases in the quotations from the Spirit of Prophecy writings are supplied.)

The writer deals with this subject many times, directly and in detail. The Index lists more than four hundred fifty such references, including duplications but excluding the hundreds of entries about studying the Bible and other inspired writings. For sixty odd years Ellen G. White continued to repeat, elaborate, and emphasize these counsels. And we know of no exceptions in this long list of messages, reaching from her first book to almost her last words to the church.

On the contrary, they continue undeviatingly to warn and exhort: Beware of questionable reading, which Satan uses mightily to allure, corrupt, and destroy. "Preoccupy the soil of the heart" with good reading, which God uses to guide, strengthen, and sanctify (FE 164, 368). On this topic she wrote in her last illness in her last message to the youth: "These things are too lightly regarded; therefore our people should become acquainted with what I am saying" (FE 547-9). Her very last vision, we are told, seems to have included a communication on this subject.

Why this urgency? The reading we choose may be a life-or-death matter. A wily foe, Satan seeks to control beginnings. If he can defile a young mind, tender and impressionable, he is doubly sure of leading the soul to ruin. This shows why we should closely watch the avenues to the soul. Often has God emphasized its importance, as: "All should guard the senses, lest Satan gain the victory over them; for these are the avenues to the soul" (3T 507).

Faithful Sentinel. "You will have to become a faithful sentinel over your eyes, ears, and all your senses if you would control your mind and prevent vain and corrupt thoughts from staining your soul. The power of grace alone can accomplish this most desirable work.

Senses paralyzed. "Satan and his angels are busy creating a paralyzed condition of the senses so that cautions, warnings, and reproofs shall not be heard; or if heard, that they shall not take effect upon the heart and reform the life" (AH 401).

Satan's Strategy is to confuse the senses. "Satan's work is to lead men to ignore God, to so engross and absorb the mind that God will not be in their thoughts. The education they have received has been of a character to confuse the mind and eclipse the true light.

Satan does not wish the people to have a knowledge of God; and if he can set in operation games and theatrical performances that will so confuse the senses of the young that human beings will perish in darkness while light shines all about them, he is well pleased" (AH 401-2).

He utilizes the avenue of reading. "The apostle (Peter) sought to teach the believers how important it is to keep the mind from wandering to forbidden

themes, or from spending its energies on trifling subjects. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan's devices, must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind must not be left to dwell at random upon every subject that the enemy of souls may suggest. The heart must be faithfully sentineled, or evils without will awaken evils within, and the soul will wander in darkness" (AA 518, MYP 285).

For convenience in reviewing, it may be helpful to quote; also to list some of the expressions used concerning –

### **READING MATTER TO BE SHUNNED**

#### **A. General characterizations**

Confuse and perplex youth CT 383, 390  
Depraved food, corrupt, corrupting CT 134; MH 444  
Drama, opera, theater, Satan employs PP 459-60  
Educates into familiarity with sin 3T 471-2; MH 444  
Excitement, unhealthy, created by ET 58; MYP 272  
Fevers and perverts the imagination 1T 241; MYP 283  
Frivolous, unimportant 5T 19  
Infatuating 5T 516  
Leads the mind in a wrong direction MYP 273  
Light reading, evil results from; havoc 2T 236; 5T 545  
Literature, erroneous, polluted; of Satan CT 389; FE 92-3  
Publications of Satan and his agents EW 96  
Seeds of sin, ideas that are; contamination CT 389; MYP 280  
Sensational, educate in evil; satanic fascination CT 133  
Superficial and unreal, the CT 543  
Unsanctified, ungodly authors; dissolute FE 174-5; CT 368  
Weans the soul from prayer 1T 242

#### **B. Nonfiction that is condemned**

Cruel; horrible doings 8T 249  
Cultivates a taste for fiction FE 162  
Delineating satanic practices of human beings MH 444-5  
Detailing crime, atrocities, horrible particulars PP 459  
Enticing error MH 445  
Giving publicity to evil, vice, crime 3T 471-2; CT 133-4  
History reciting enormities CT 133-4  
Infidelity, in its various forms PP 111; CT 136, 401  
Immoral books, exciting passion 3T 472; MYP 277  
Paganism, wells of; pagan sentiments Ed 226; FE 167-73  
Pantheism, and threads of MM 98  
Philosophy, deceptive, conjecture IT 297; Ed 74; 8T 319  
Pictures, ridiculous, by satanic agencies MYP 286; 2T 410  
Skepticism, mists of; miasmas of hell MM 91; FE 93  
Specious errors MM 98  
Spiritistic sophistry, fables, pagan philosophy MM 87-103  
Stories, trashy, true or fictitious, like poison 5T 544-5  
Theories, new and fanciful; lead away MM 96, 9T 68

Tales, frivolous and exciting MH 445  
War and bloodshed MYP 277

### **C. Fiction condemned**

Can excite, intoxicate, abuse mind 4T 497, 581; MH 446  
Fiction, no suggestion of impurity and intended to teach excellent principles, yet is harmful CT 383  
Fiction, though of the better class, is harmful MH 446  
Fiction, total abstinence from, only safety MH 446  
Fables; also Aesop's Fables FE 184, 391  
Imagination may be overexcited and diseased by 4T 497  
Love stories, a curse MYP 272  
Magazines, story CT 120  
Myths, fairy tales; false views; want the unreal 8T 308-9  
Novels, put away every MYP 286  
Novels, all are pernicious in their influence 2T 236  
Novel and story magazines, Satan's agencies CT 121  
Novel, story reading harms mind, body 2T 302; 4T 497-8  
Novel, story reading greatest evil youth indulge 3T 152  
Novel reading, no time for  
Romance MH 445  
Stories, exciting, fascinating, idle 1T 504; MYP 283  
Storybooks, Sunday-school, a snare 1T 124-26; 5T 506, 516  
Story-reading, imagination of devotees diseased MYP 290

## **READING MATTER TO BE USED**

### **A. General characterizations**

Advance in every branch of true knowledge Ed 18  
Awakens a desire to reach God's ideal Ed 19  
Blessing to mind and soul MYP 288  
Dwelling on practical faith and godliness 7T 158  
Encourages sincerity of life; leads to the Bible MYP 288  
Grasp the stupendous truths of revelation MYP 255-6  
Interesting; imparts knowledge, right principles CW 134  
Of vital importance FE 547  
Proper food; pure, strengthening thoughts CT 121, 137  
Solid reading; sensible reading CT 137; 5T 519  
Store the mind with valuable knowledge CT 133  
Substantial knowledge; strength of intellect 5T 544  
Testimonies to be in every family, read repeatedly 4T 390  
Useful information, scientific knowledge 5T 545  
Useful, instructive, elevating books 1T 399; CW 134  
Very best material into character-building CT 133

### **B. To preoccupy the soil, give tone to the mind CT 121, 544**

Bible to be our study above every other book MYP 426  
Bible stories may teach principles of God's law Ed 185  
Points of our faith to be stamped on memory FE 547

Scan the religious attractions of the truth FE 548  
Must follow directions from Spirit of Prophecy 8T 298  
"We could begin a course of reading so intensely interesting that it would attract and influence many minds." FE 548

### **C. In school**

#### **Elementary and intermediate level**

Common branches "fully," "prayerfully taught" CT 210, 215  
Literary training FE 368

#### **Secondary and advanced**

Bible in the first place  
Language, mother tongue fundamental CT 216-7  
Literary acquirements, God's smile may be on FE 192  
Literary attainments, not cheapened by religion FE 118  
Literary qualifications, be urgent need for (1981) FE 192  
Literary talent to be appreciated FE 120-1  
Literary training needed to develop harmoniously FE 255  
Literary training required for some positions FE 256  
Literary training be combined with the practical FE 368

#### **Premedical and scientific**

All the literary and scientific training needed CT 479-81

"The Lord desires us to obtain all the education possible, with the object in view of imparting our knowledge to others. None can know where or how they may be called to labor or speak for God. Our Heavenly Father alone sees what He can make of men. There are before us possibilities which our feeble faith does not discern --Christ's Object Lessons, p. 333

"What havoc has this love for light reading wrought with the mind! How it has destroyed the principles of sincerity and true godliness, which lie at the foundation of a symmetrical character." --Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 545.

"Our minds should be so trained that if necessary we can present the truths of His word before the highest earthly authorities in such a way as to glorify His name." --Christ's Object Lessons, p. 333.

"A love for fictitious reading should be overcome at once." --Counsels to Teachers, p. 136.

"When a wrong impression is left upon the mind in youth, a mark is made, not on sand, but on enduring rock." --Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 545.

"Each should aim just as high as the union of human with divine power makes it possible for him to reach." --Education, p. 267.

"Keep reaching higher and still higher." --Testimonies, vol. 7, p. 281.

#### **2 Quotations: what to avoid**

How eager we are to read! Yet before we set out, let us think of a bombing mission. Though expertly trained and equipped, the crew, before taking off, are carefully briefed about their objective and the plans of the enemy to be thwarted.

**So with reading.** When we learn of the snares and pitfalls in improper reading first, then the positive instructions stand out clear and meaningful. The wealth of counsel from Heaven centers in one great guiding principle: read what will strengthen and perfect character; avoid the opposite. But since Satan has "a thousand ways and plans" to beguile us, God has in kindness broken down His instruction into many precious details to help us avoid the hosts of enticements and sophistries of the foe. The quotations in this chapter, then, give instructions to help us return safely from each reading "mission."

**Professionals, reading of.** The duties of professionals may sometimes require them to read that which others should not read. And a kindly caution was given to warn that dangers attend such reading. "There is danger that the false sentiments expressed in the books that they have been reading will sometimes be interwoven by our ministers, teachers, and editors, with their arguments, discourses, and publications, under the belief that they are the same in principle as the teachings of the Spirit of truth" (9T 68).

"Never should books containing a perversion of truth be placed in the hands of children or youth. Let not our children, in the very process of obtaining an education, receive ideas that will prove to be seeds of sin. If those with mature minds had nothing to do with such books, they would themselves be far safer, and their example and influence on the right side would make it far less difficult to guard the youth from temptation" (MH 447).

"The harm that results to the workers (publishing house) from handling matter of an objectionable character is too little realized. Their attention is arrested, and their interest aroused by the subject matter with which they are dealing. Sentences are imprinted in the memory. Thoughts are suggested. Almost unconsciously the reader is influenced by the spirit of the writer, and mind and character receive an impress for evil. There are some who have little faith and little power of self-control, and it is difficult for them to banish the thoughts suggested by such literature" (7T 203).

This was written about the printing of secular books of an objectionable character in our publishing houses. The reproof given was made a part of the records to be preserved for study by the church.

"In the study of these objectionable books (of infidel authors) the minds of teachers as well as students become corrupted, and the enemy sows his tares. It cannot be otherwise" (6T 164).

**Enticing error.** "The world is flooded with books that are filled with enticing error. The youth receive as truth that which the Bible denounces as falsehood, and they love and cling to deception that means ruin to the soul" (MH 445).

**Sensational stories, tales.** "It is Satan's work to present to our youth newspaper stories and storybooks that fascinate the senses and thus destroy their relish for the word of God" (5T 517).

"Books on sensational topics, published and circulated as a money-making scheme, might better never be read by the youth. There is a satanic fascination in such books. The heart-sickening recital of crimes and atrocities

has a bewitching power upon many, exciting them to see what they can do to bring themselves into notice, even by the wickedest deeds" (CT 133).

"Many of the popular publications of the day are filled with sensational stories, that are educating the youth in wickedness, and leading them in the path to perdition. Mere children in years are old in a knowledge of crime. They are incited to evil by the tales they read. In imagination they act over the deeds portrayed, until their ambition is aroused to see what they can do in committing crime and evading punishment.

"To the active minds of children and youth, the scenes pictured in imaginary revelations of the future are realities. As revolutions are predicted, and all manner of proceedings described that break down the barriers of law and self-restraint, many catch the spirit of these representations. They are led to the commission of crimes even worse, if possible, than these sensational writers depict. Through such influences as these society is becoming demoralized. The seeds of lawlessness are sown broadcast. None need marvel that a harvest of crime is the result.

**Romance.** "Works of romance, frivolous, exciting tales, are, in hardly less degree, a curse to the reader. The author may profess to teach a moral lesson, throughout his work he may interweave religious sentiments; but often these serve only to veil the folly and worthlessness beneath" (MH 444-5).

**Fiction, common.** "Cheap works of fiction do not profit. They impart no real knowledge; they inspire no great and good purpose; they kindle in the heart no earnest desires for purity; they excite no soul hunger for righteousness. On the contrary, they take time which should be given to the practical duties of life and to the service of God--time which should be devoted to prayer, to visiting the sick, caring for the needy, and educating yourself for a useful life" (FE 92).

"There is a multitude of fiction-writers, luring to pleasant dreams in palaces of ease. These writers may not be open to the charge of immorality, yet their work is no less truly fraught with evil" (Ed 227).

"The readers of fiction are indulging an evil that destroys spirituality, eclipsing the beauty of the sacred page. It creates an unhealthy excitement, fevers the imagination, unfits the mind for usefulness, weans the soul from prayer, and disqualifies it for any spiritual exercise" (MYP 272).

**Fiction, "high-class."** "There are works of fiction that were written for the purpose of teaching truth or exposing some great evil. Some of these works have accomplished good. Yet they have also wrought untold harm. They contain statements and highly wrought pen-pictures that excite the imagination and give rise to a train of thought which is full of danger, especially to the youth. The scenes described are lived over and over again in their thoughts. Such reading unfits the mind for usefulness, and disqualifies it for spiritual exercise. It destroys interest in the Bible. Heavenly things find little place in the thoughts. As the mind dwells upon the scenes of impurity portrayed, passion is aroused, and the end is sin.

"Even fiction which contains no suggestion of impurity, and which may be intended to teach excellent principles, is harmful. It encourages the habit of hasty and superficial reading, merely for the story. Thus it tends to destroy the

power of connected and vigorous thought; it unfits the mind to contemplate the great problems of duty and destiny.

"It is often urged that in order to win the youth from sensational or worthless literature, we should supply them with a better class of fiction. This is like trying to cure the drunkard by giving him, in place of whiskey and brandy, the milder intoxicants, such as wine, beer, and cider. The use of these would continually foster the appetite for stronger stimulants. The only safety for the inebriate, and the only safeguard for the temperate man, is total abstinence. For the lover of fiction the same rule holds true. Total abstinence is his only safety" (MH 445-6).

**Novels.** "Put away every novel...." (MYP 286). "Novel and storybook reading are the greatest evils in which youth can indulge. Novel and love-story readers always fail to make good, practical mothers. They are air-castle builders, living in an unreal, imaginary world. They become sentimental, and have sick fancies. Their artificial life spoils them for anything useful. They are dwarfed in intellect, although they may flatter themselves that they are superior in mind and manners" (3T 152).

**"Love stories, frivolous, exciting tales, and even that class of books called religious novels--books in which the author attaches to his story a moral lesson--** are a curse to the readers. Religious sentiments may be woven all through a story-book, but in most cases, Satan is but clothed in angel-ropes, the more effectively to deceive and allure. None are so confirmed in right principles, none so secure from temptation, that they are safe in reading these stories" (MYP 272). (Temcat note—a book called 'Paula, the Waldensian' is of this type and even historic Adventists are lapping it up!)

"By fostering love for mere amusement, the reading of fiction creates a distaste for life's practical duties. Through its exciting, intoxicating power, it is not infrequently a cause of both mental and physical disease. Many a miserable, neglected home, many a lifelong invalid, many an inmate of the insane asylum, has become such through the habit of novel reading" (MH 446).

Novels should not find a place in the homes of those who believe in Christ" (ML 89). "We do not need novels" (CW 147). Though some are not of as dangerous a character as others, "all are pernicious in their influence" (2T 236).

**Light reading, stories.** "If their (children's) minds are filled with stories, be they true or fictitious, there is no room for the useful information and scientific knowledge which should occupy them. What havoc has this love for light reading wrought with the mind! How it has destroyed the principles of sincerity and true godliness, which lie at the foundation of a symmetrical character. It is like a slow poison taken into the system, which will sooner or later reveal its bitter effects. When a wrong impression is left upon the mind in youth, a mark is made, not on sand, but on enduring rock" (5T 545).

**Myths and fairy tales.** "In the education of children and youth, fairy tales, myths, and fictitious stories are now given a large place. Books of this character are used in the schools, and they are to be found in many homes. How can Christian parents permit their children to use books so filled with falsehood? When the children ask the meaning of stories so contrary to the

teachings of their parents, the answer is that the stories are not true; but this does not do away with the evil results of their use. The ideas presented in these books mislead the children. They impart false views of life, and beget and foster a desire for the unreal. "The widespread use of such books at this time is one of the cunning devices of Satan" (MH 446-7).

**Fables, Aesop's.** "It seems wonderfully strange to me, considering all I have written in regard to the reading of exciting stories, to see a recommendation from your pen to read Robinson Crusoe, Uncle Tom's Cabin, and Aesop's Fables. My brother, you made a mistake in writing that article. If these books are among those which you have for sale, I beg of you never to offer them again to our youth" (5T 519). The foregoing statements were written from Europe to D. M. Canright, then one of our prominent ministers, who had just published an article in the Review.

**Funnies, Comics.** "We would do well to clear our houses of all the story magazines and the publications containing ridiculous pictures -- representations originated by satanic agencies. The youth cannot afford to poison their minds with such things. "What is the chaff to the wheat?" (MYP 286).

**Trashy reading.** "Let the mind grasp the stupendous truths of revelation, and it will never be content to employ its powers upon frivolous themes; it will turn with disgust from the trashy literature and idle amusements that are demoralizing the youth of today."

"Resolutely discard all trashy reading."

"Keep the mind free from everything that would lead it in a wrong direction. Do not encumber it with trashy stories, which impart no strength to the mental powers. The thoughts are of the same character as the food provided for the mind" (MYP 255-6, 273).

**Skepticism and infidelity.** "Human minds are easily charmed with studies that lead to infidelity" (CT 401).

"Skepticism is attractive to the human mind. The youth see in it an independence that captivates the imagination, and they are deceived. Satan triumphs. He nourishes every seed of doubt that is sown in young hearts. He causes it to grow and bear fruit, and soon a plentiful harvest of infidelity is reaped.

"It is because the human heart is inclined to evil that it is so dangerous to sow seeds of skepticism in young minds. Whatever weakens faith in God robs the soul of power to resist temptation. It removes the only real safeguard against sin. . . .

"In order to obtain an education, many think it essential to study the writings of infidel authors, because these works contain many bright gems of thought. But who was the originator of these gems of thought? -- It was God, and God only. He is the source of all light. Why then should we wade through the mass of error contained in the works of infidels for the sake of a few intellectual truths, when all truth is at our command?

"How is it that men who are at war with the government of God come into possession of the wisdom which they sometimes display? Satan himself was educated in the heavenly courts, and he has a knowledge of good as well as of evil. He mingles the precious with the vile, and this is what gives him power to deceive" (MH 439-40). See also FE 167-73.

"Evil angels are ever alert that they may exalt before the minds of the youth that which will do them injury, and as books expressing infidel and pagan sentiments are read, these unseen agents of evil seek to impress those who study them with the spirit of questioning and unbelief" (FE 168).

"In the study of these objectionable books (of infidel authors) the minds of teachers as well as students become corrupted, and the enemy sows his tares. It cannot be otherwise. By drinking of an impure fountain, poison is introduced into the system. Inexperienced youth taken over this line of study receive impressions which lead their thoughts into channels that are fatal to piety" (6T 164).

"Suffer not yourselves to open the lids of a book that is questionable. There is a hellish fascination in the literature of Satan. It is the powerful battery by which he tears down a simple religious faith. Never feel that you are strong enough to read infidel books; for they contain a poison like that of asps. They can do you no good, and will assuredly do you harm. In reading them, you are inhaling the miasmas of hell. They will be to your soul like a corrupt stream of water, defiling the mind, keeping it in the mazes of skepticism, and making it earthly and sensual. These books were written by men whom Satan employs as his agents; and by this means he designs to confuse the mind" (FE 93).

**Confusing the mind.** "For thousands of years Satan has been experimenting upon the properties of the human mind, and he has learned to know it well. By his subtle workings in these last days, he is linking the human mind with his own, imbuing it with his thoughts; and he is doing this work in so deceptive a manner that those who accept his guidance know not that they are being led by him at his will. The great deceiver hopes so to confuse the minds of men and women that none but his voice will be heard" (MM 111).

**Drama, opera, theater.** "Through the drama" Satan "has worked for ages to excite passion and glorify vice. The opera, with its fascinating display and bewildering music, the masquerade, the dance, the card-table, Satan employs to break down the barriers of principle, and open the door to sensual indulgence" (PP 459-60).

"Among the most dangerous resorts for pleasure is the theater. Instead of being a school for morality and virtue, as is often claimed, it is the very hotbed of immorality. Vicious habits and sinful propensities are strengthened and confirmed by these entertainments. Low songs, lewd gestures, expressions, and attitudes, deprave the imagination and debase the morals. Every youth who habitually attends such exhibitions will be corrupted in principle. There is no influence in our land more powerful to poison the imagination, to destroy religious impressions, and to blunt the relish for tranquil pleasures and sober realities of life, than theatrical amusements" (MYP 380).

**False science.** "We need to guard continually against those books which contain sophistry in regard to geology and other branches of science" (CT 390).

"False science is one of the agencies that Satan used in the heavenly courts, and it is used by him today. The false assertions that he made to the angels, his subtle scientific theories, seduced many of them from their loyalty" (8T 290).

"We must not forget that Satan still lives to exercise his deceptive power through false science" (9T 69).

"Satanic agencies are clothing false theories in an attractive garb, even as Satan in the Garden of Eden concealed his identity from our first parents by speaking through the serpent. These agencies are instilling into human minds that which in reality is deadly error. The hypnotic influence of Satan will rest upon those who turn from the plain word of God to pleasing fables.

"It is those who have had most light that Satan most assiduously seeks to ensnare. He knows that if he can deceive them, they will, under his control, clothe sin with garments of righteousness, and lead many astray" (8T 294).

"Knowledge and science must be vitalized by the Spirit of God in order to serve the noblest purposes. The Christian alone can make the right use of knowledge. Science, in order to be fully appreciated, must be viewed from a religious standpoint" (TM 196; MM 97).

**Literature in our schools.** "There is need of separating from our educational work an erroneous, polluted literature, so that ideas which are the seeds of sin will not be received and cherished as the truth. Let not any suppose that a study of books which will lead to the reception of false ideas, is valuable education" (CT 389). (1913)

"Many books of no real value, books that are exciting and unhealthful, are recommended or at least permitted to be used, because of their supposed literary value. Why should we direct our children to drink of these polluted streams, when they may have free access to the pure fountains of the word of God?" (Ed 188).

"A mass of tradition, with merely a semblance of truth, is being brought into education, which will never fit the learner to live in this life so that he may obtain the higher, immortal life. The literature placed in our schools, written by infidels and so-called wise men, does not contain the education that students should have" (FE 407).

"In the study of language and literature, from what fountains are the youth taught to drink? -- From wells of paganism; from springs fed by the corruptions of ancient heathendom. They are bidden to study authors, of whom, without dispute, it is declared that they have no regard for the principles of morality. And of how many modern authors might the same be said! With how many are grace and beauty of language but a disguise for principles that in their real deformity would repel the reader" (Ed 226-7).

"The Lord expects our teachers to expel from our schools those books that teach sentiments which are not in accordance with His word, and to give place to those books that are of the highest value" (FE 517).

"A pure education for youth in our schools, undiluted with heathen philosophy, is a positive necessity in literary lines" (FE 388).

**Greek and Latin.** "There are callings in which a knowledge of Greek and Latin is needed. Some must study these languages. But the knowledge of them essential for practical uses might be gained without a study of literature that is corrupt and corrupting" (MH 444).

**Historical and theological lore; research.** In Chapter 3 we shall read such appealing words as these: "All who engage in the acquisition of knowledge should strive to reach the highest round of the ladder. Let students advance as fast and as far as they can; let the field of their study be as broad as their powers can compass; but let them make God their wisdom."

"There is a study of history that is not to be condemned." Yet God saw the need of accompanying these with cautions and warnings, which, being remembered, will help us avoid dangers and gain success:

"As a preparation for Christian work, many think it essential to acquire an extensive knowledge of historical and theological writings. They suppose that this knowledge will be an aid to them in teaching the gospel. But their laborious study of the opinions of men tends to the enfeebling of their ministry, rather than to its strengthening. . . .

"And, to a great degree, theology, as studied and taught, is but a record of human speculation, serving only to 'darken counsel by words without knowledge.' Too often the motive in accumulating these many books is not so much a desire to obtain food for the mind and soul, as it is an ambition to become acquainted with philosophers and theologians, a desire to present Christianity to the people in learned terms and propositions.

"Not all the books written can serve the purpose of a holy life. "Learn of Me,' said the great Teacher, "Take My yoke upon you,' learn My meekness and lowliness.' Your intellectual pride will not aid you in communicating with souls that are perishing for want of the bread of life. In your study of these books, you are allowing them to take the place of the practical lessons you should be learning from Christ. With the results of this study the people are not fed. Very little of the research which is so wearying to the mind furnishes that which will help one to be a successful laborer for souls" (MH 441-2).

**Gems of thought in a framework of error.** "The Lord bestowed upon these men whom the world admires, priceless intellectual gifts; He endowed them with master-minds; but they did not use their powers to the glory of God. They separated themselves from Him, as did Satan; but while they separated themselves from Him, they still retained many of the precious gems of thought which He had given them. These they have placed in a framework of error, to give luster to their human sentiments, to make attractive the utterances inspired by the prince of evil.

"It is true that in the writings of pagans and infidels there are found thoughts of an elevated character, which are attractive to the mind. But there is a reason for this. Was not Satan the light-bearer, the sharer of God's glory in heaven, and next to Jesus in power and majesty? . . .

"The greatness and power with which the Creator endowed Lucifer, he has perverted; yet when it suits his purpose, he can impart to men sentiments that are enchanting. Satan can inspire his agents with thoughts that appear elevating and noble.... It is thus that he comes to men, disguising his temptations under an appearance of goodness and making them believe him to be the friend rather than the enemy of humanity. In this way he has deceived and seduced the race" (CT 26-7).

(Edward) "Gibbon the skeptic, and many others whom God endowed with giant minds, and whom the world called great men, rallied under the banner of Satan and used the gifts of God for the perversion of truth and the destruction of the souls of men. Great intellect, when made a minister of vice, is a curse to the possessor and to all who come within the circle of its influence" (4T 520).

"There is another class of books that you should avoid -- the productions of such infidel writers as Paine and (Robert) Ingersol" (FE 93). Satan "was so intimately connected with Paine upon the earth, aiding him in his work, that it is an easy thing for him to know the very words Paine used and the very handwriting of one who served him so faithfully and accomplished his purposes so well. Satan dictated much of his writings, and it is an easy thing for him to dictate sentiments through his angels now and make it appear that they come through Thomas Paine, who, while living, was a devoted servant of the evil one" (EW 90-1, 264-5).

"Byron had intellectual conception and depth of thought, but he was not a man according to God's standard. He was an agent of Satan. His passions were fierce and uncontrollable. Through his life he was sowing seed which blossomed into a harvest of corruption. His lifework lowered the standard of virtue. This man was one of the world's distinguished men; still the Lord would not acknowledge him as a man, but only as one who had abused his God-given talents" (4T 519-20).

Shakespeare. "Let them see the sinfulness of exalting such men as Shakespeare, calling the attention of the people to those who did not in their lives honor God or represent Christ." This statement is from a letter written to our leaders at the Pacific Press in 1902, which also said: "I was greatly pained to see on the first page of a recent issue of the Signs a picture of the birthplace of Shakespeare, accompanied by an article on Shakespeare. May the Lord pity our discernment if we have no better food than this to give the flock of God. It greatly distresses me to see those in positions of trust, who should daily be gaining a rich experience, placing such matter before the people" (CW 172-6). See also MS 169 '02. It was made a part of the record left for the instruction of the church.

**Excessive study and reading.** "Too great devotion to study, even of true science, creates an abnormal appetite, which increases as it is fed. This creates a desire to secure more knowledge than is essential to do the work of the Lord. The pursuit of knowledge merely for its own sake, diverts the mind from devotion to God, checks advance along the path of practical holiness, and hinders souls from traveling in the way which leads to a holier, happier life. The Lord Jesus imparted only such a measure of instruction as could be utilized" (FE 338). See also CH 185-88.

"There are men and women now in the decline of life who have never recovered from the effects of intemperate reading.... Many have never recovered their original vigor of mind.... Nor is the physical effect less disastrous. The nervous system is unnecessarily taxed by this passion for reading. In some cases youth, and even those of mature age, have been afflicted with paralysis from no other cause than excess in reading.... Intemperate habits of reading exert a pernicious influence upon the brain as surely as does intemperance in eating and drinking" (MYP 280-1).

**Improper habits of reading, effects of.** "Those who have indulged the habit of racing through exciting stories, are crippling their mental strength, and disqualifying themselves for vigorous thought and research" (MYP 280).

"Wrong habits of thought, when once accepted, become a despotic power that fastens the mind as in a grasp of steel" (CT 402). See also 2T 433.

**Satan's thousand ways and plans.** "There are a thousand ways and plans that Satan has of creeping in to unsettle the minds of youth; and unless the soul is firmly and fully stayed upon God, and conscientiously guarded upon the very point of keeping the mind employed in searching the Scriptures and becoming grounded in our faith, they will surely be ensnared. We cannot be off guard for a moment. We cannot allow ourselves to move from impulse. We must set a guard about our minds and the minds of our children" (5T 519-20).

**Unceasing watchfulness.** "Yet we have a work to do to resist temptation. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan's devices must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind should not be left to wander at random upon every subject that the adversary of souls may suggest. 'Girding up the loins of your mind,' says the apostle Peter, 'be sober, . . . not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance; but like as He which called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living.' Says Paul, 'Whatsoever things are true,.. honest,.. just,.. pure,.. lovely,.. of good report; if there be any virtue,.. any praise, think on these things.' This will require earnest prayer and unceasing watchfulness. We must be aided by the abiding influence of the Holy Spirit, which will attract the mind upward, and habituate it to dwell on pure and holy things. And we must give diligent study to the word of God" (PP 460).

**Mental tastes to be trained.** "The mental tastes must be disciplined and educated with the greatest care" (CT 136).

**Experimental knowledge of God first.** "While the pursuit of knowledge in art, in literature, and in trades, should not be discouraged, the student should first secure an experimental knowledge of God and His will" (CT 19).

"If their minds are filled with stories, be they true or fictitious, there is no room for the useful information and scientific knowledge which should occupy them." --Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 545.

"Amusements and unprofitable reading spoil the judgment." -- Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 43.

"Little do parents consider that injurious impressions are far more readily received by the young than are divine impressions." --Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 544

"We should not let slip even one opportunity to qualify ourselves intellectually to work for God." --Christ's Object Lessons p. 334

"All who engage in the acquisition of knowledge should strive to reach the highest round of the ladder." --Counsels to Teachers, p. 394.

"Put your highest power into all your effort. Call to your aid the most powerful motives. You are learning. Endeavor to go to the bottom of everything you set your hand to. Never aim lower than to become competent in the matters which occupy you. Do not allow yourself to fall into the habit of being superficial and neglectful in your duties and studies." --Sons and Daughters of God, p. 106

"Satan is doing more through the productions of the press to weaken the minds and corrupt the morals of the youth than by any other means." --Counsels to Writers and Editors, p. 134

"There is one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written." --E. G. White Letter 329a, 1905.

"Everyone should feel that there rests upon him an obligation to reach the height of intellectual greatness." --Gospel Workers, p. 279

God wants as perfect work as it is possible for human beings to do." --Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 535.

### **3 Quotations: What to Read and Study**

**The very best material into character-building.** "Supply books that will help the youth to put into their character-building the very best material -- the love and fear of God, the knowledge of Christ. Encourage your children to store the mind with valuable knowledge, to let that which is good occupy the soul and control its powers, leaving no place for low, debasing thoughts. Restrict the desire for reading matter that does not furnish good food for the mind" (CT 133).

**The primal object.** "While religious principle is held paramount, every advance step taken in the acquirement of knowledge or in the culture of the intellect, is a step toward the assimilation of the human with the divine, the finite with the infinite" (CT 52).

**Direct minds to the sources of truth -- nature and revelation.** "Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with power akin to that of the Creator -- individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power; to train youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thoughts. Instead of confining their study to that which men have said or written, let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation. Let them contemplate the great facts of duty and destiny, and the mind will expand and strengthen."

**The highest standard.** "Before the student there is opened a path of continual progress. He has an object to achieve, a standard to attain, that includes everything good, and pure, and noble. He will advance as fast and as

far as possible in every branch of true knowledge, but his efforts will be directed to objects as much higher than mere selfish and temporal interests as the heavens are higher than the earth" (Ed 17-19).

"All who engage in the acquisition of knowledge should strive to reach the highest round of the ladder. Let the students advance as fast and as far as they can; let the field of their study be as broad as their powers can compass; but let them make God their wisdom, clinging to Him who is infinite in knowledge, who can reveal secrets hidden for ages, and who can solve the most difficult problems for minds that believe in Him" (CT 394-5).

**The Bible as a source of culture.** "The Bible contains all the principles that men need in order to be fitted either for this life or for the life to come. And these principles may be understood by all. No one with a spirit to appreciate its teaching can read a single passage from the Bible without gaining from it some helpful thought. But the most valuable teaching of the Bible is not to be gained by occasional or disconnected study. Its great system of truth is not so presented as to be discovered by the hasty or careless reader. Many of its treasures lie far beneath the surface, and can be obtained only by diligent research and continuous effort. The truths that go to make up the great whole must be searched out and gathered up, 'here a little, and there a little.'"

"And not alone in searching out truth and bringing it together does the mental value of Bible study consist. It consists also in the effort required to grasp the themes presented. The mind occupied with commonplace matters only, becomes dwarfed and enfeebled. If never tasked to comprehend grand and far-reaching truths, it after a time loses the power of growth. As a safeguard against this degeneracy, and a stimulus to development, nothing else can equal the study of God's word. As a means of intellectual training, the Bible is more effective than any other book, or all other books combined. The greatness of its themes, the dignified simplicity of its utterances, the beauty of its imagery, quicken and uplift the thoughts as nothing else can. No other study can impart such mental power as does the effort to grasp the stupendous truths of revelation. The mind thus brought in contact with the thoughts of the Infinite cannot but expand and strengthen."

"In its wide range of style and subjects, the Bible has something to interest every mind and appeal to every heart. In its pages are found history the most ancient; biography the truest to life; principles of government for the control of the state, for the regulation of the household -- principles that human wisdom has never equaled. It contains philosophy the most profound, poetry the sweetest and most sublime, the most impassioned and the most pathetic. Immeasurably superior in value to the productions of any human author are the Bible writings, even when thus considered; but of infinitely wider scope, of infinitely greater value, are they when viewed in their relation to the grand central thought. Viewed in the light of this thought, every topic has a new significance. In the most simply stated truths are involved principles that are as high as heaven and that compass eternity" (Ed 123-25).

"The grand subjects upon which the Bible treats, the dignified simplicity of its utterances, the elevated themes which it presents to the mind, the light, sharp and clear, from the throne of God, enlightening the understanding, will

develop the powers of the mind to an extent that can scarcely be comprehended, and never fully explained" (MYP 253-55).

**The Bible as history.** "The grand truths of sacred history possess amazing strength and beauty, and are as far-reaching as eternity" (CT 427).

"The Bible is the most ancient and the most comprehensive history that men possess. It came fresh from the fountain of eternal truth, and throughout the ages a divine hand has preserved its purity. It lights up the far-distant past, where human research in vain seeks to penetrate. In God's word only do we behold the power that laid the foundations of the earth, and that stretched out the heavens. Here only is given a history of our race unsullied by human pride or prejudice."

"The Bible reveals the true philosophy of history" (Ed 173).

**Poetry; the Psalms.** "The oldest as well as the most sublime of poetic utterances known to man are found in the Scriptures" (Ed 159).

"But with new inspiration he (David) composed his melodies, and played upon his harp. Before him spread a landscape of rich and varied beauty. The vines, with their clustering fruit, brightened in the sunshine. The forest trees, with their green foliage, swayed in the breeze. He beheld the sun flooding the heavens with light, and coming forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. There were the bold summits of the hills reaching toward the sky; in the faraway distance rose the barren cliffs of the mountain wall of Moab; above all spread the tender blue of the overarching heavens. And beyond was God. He could not see him but his works were full of his praise. The light of day, gilding forest and mountain, meadow and stream, carried the mind up to behold the Father of lights, the Author of every good and perfect gift. Daily revelations of the character and majesty of the Creator, filled the young poet's heart with adoration and rejoicing. In contemplation of God and his works, the faculties of David's mind and heart were developing and strengthening for the work of his after-life. He was daily coming into a more intimate communion with God. His mind was constantly penetrating into new depths, for fresh themes to inspire his song, and to wake the music of his harp. The rich melody of his voice poured out upon the air, echoed from the hills as if responsive to the rejoicing of the angels' song in heaven.

"Who can measure the results of those years of toil and wandering among the lonely hills? The communion with nature and with God, the care of his flocks, the perils and deliverances, the griefs and joys, of his lowly lot, were not only to mould the character of David, and to influence his future life, but through the psalms of Israel's sweet singer, they were, in all coming ages, to kindle love and faith in the hearts of God's people, bringing them nearer to the ever-loving heart of Him in whom all his creatures live" (PP 641-2).

**Stories of the Bible.** "In all that men have written, where can be found anything that has such a hold upon the heart, anything so well adapted to awaken the interest of the little ones, as the stories of the Bible?"

**Bible stories illuminate God's law.** "In these simple stories may be made plain the great principles of the law of God" (Ed 185).

**The Bible a living power.** "The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature, and re-creates the soul in the image of God" (Ed 126).

**Bible; lives of its great men.** "Sacred history "presents many noble examples of men whose characters were formed under divine direction, men whose lives were a blessing to their fellow-men, and who stood in the world as representatives of God. Among these are Joseph and Daniel, Moses, Elisha, and Paul -- the greatest statesmen, the wisest legislator, one of the most faithful reformers, and, except Him who spoke as never man spake, the most illustrious teacher that this world has known" (Ed 51).

Joseph. "At the time when he was called to the court of Pharaoh, Egypt was the greatest of the nations. In civilization, art, learning, she was unequaled. Through a period of utmost difficulty and danger, Joseph administered the affairs of the kingdom; and he did this in a manner that won the confidence of the king and the people." "Loyalty to God, faith in the Unseen, was Joseph's anchor. In this lay the hiding of his power. The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob" (Ed 53-54).

Moses. "Moses was fitted to take pre-eminence among the great of the earth, to shine in the courts of its most glorious kingdom, and to sway the scepter of its power. His intellectual greatness distinguishes him above the great men of all ages. As historian, poet, philosopher, general of armies, and legislator, he stands without a peer" (PP 246). See also 1BC 1113.

Daniel and companions. "At the court of Babylon were gathered representatives from all lands, men of the choicest talents, men the most richly endowed with natural gifts, and possessed of the richest culture this world could bestow; yet amidst them all, the Hebrew captives were without a peer. In physical strength and beauty, in mental vigor and literary attainment, they stood unrivaled" (Ed 55). See also 4T 570.

Paul. "No man ever lived who was a more earnest, energetic, and self-sacrificing disciple of Christ than was Paul. He was one of the world's greatest teachers. He crossed the seas and traveled far and near, until a large portion of the world had learned from his lips the story of the cross of Christ. He possessed a burning desire to bring perishing man to a knowledge of the truth through a Saviour's love" (4T 409).

"Foremost among those called to preach the gospel of Christ stands the apostle Paul, to every minister an example of loyalty, devotion, and untiring effort."

"Paul carried with him the atmosphere of heaven. All who associated with him felt the influence of his union with Christ. The fact that his own life exemplified the truth he proclaimed, gave convincing power to his preaching" (GW 58, 59).

**Bible biographies.** "As an educator no part of the Bible is of greater value than are its biographies. These biographies differ from all others in that they are absolutely true to life. It is impossible for any finite mind to interpret

rightly, in all things, the workings of another. None but He who reads the heart, who discerns the secret springs of motive and action, can with absolute truth delineate character, or give a faithful picture of a human life. In God's word alone is found such delineation" (Ed 146).

"The lives recorded in the Bible are authentic histories of actual individuals. From Adam down through successive generations to the times of the apostles we have a plain, unvarnished account of what actually occurred and the genuine experience of real characters" (4T 9).

Take time for the Book of books; neglect. "Above all, take time to read the Bible -- the Book of books. A daily study of Scriptures has a sanctifying, uplifting influence upon the mind. Bind the holy volume to your hearts. It will prove to you a friend and guide in perplexity."

"Both old and young neglect the Bible. They do not make it their study, the rule of their life. Especially are the young guilty of this neglect. Most of them find time to read other books, but the book that points out the way to eternal life is not daily studied."

"The importance of seeking a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures can hardly be estimated" (CT 138, 139).

**Denominational history.** "In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history" (LS 33 196).

Books like Early Writings, Life Sketches, Captains of the Host, A Prophet Among You, and others, are calculated to fire our hearts as we read of the inception and rise of the third angel's message.

**Study health principles.** "Let our people show that they have a living interest in medical missionary work. Let them prepare themselves for usefulness by studying the books that have been written for our instruction in these lines. These books deserve much more attention and appreciation than they have received. Much that is for the benefit of all to understand has been written for the special purpose of instruction in the principles of health. Those who study and practice these principles will be greatly blessed, both physically and spiritually."

**Form a home reading circle.** "Take time to read to your children from the health books, as well as from the books treating more particularly on religious subjects. Teach them the importance of caring for the body -- the house they live in. Form a home reading circle, in which every member of the family shall lay aside the busy cares of the day, and unite in study. Fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, take up this work heartily, and see if the home church will not be greatly improved" (CH 426, 427).

**Dawn of reason.** "From the first dawn of reason, the human mind should become intelligent in regard to the physical structure. Here Jehovah has given a specimen of Himself; for man was made in the image of God."

**Physical law divine in origin.** "The Creator of man has arranged the living machinery of our bodies. Every function is wonderfully and wisely made. And God has pledged Himself to keep this human machinery in healthful action if the human agent will obey His laws and cooperate with God. Every law governing the human machinery is to be considered just as truly divine in origin, in character, and in importance as the word of God. Every careless, inattentive action, any abuse put upon the Lord's wonderful mechanism, by disregarding His specified laws in the human habitation, is a violation of God's law" (MM 221).

**Learn how to eat, drink, dress.** "Knowledge must be gained in regard to how to eat, and drink, and dress so as to preserve health" (DF 21).

The mind influences the body; the body, the mind. "The influence of the mind on the body, as well as of the body on the mind, should be emphasized. The electric power of the brain, promoted by mental activity, vitalizes the whole system, and is thus an invaluable aid in resisting disease. This should be made plain. The power of the will and the importance of self-control, both in the preservation and in the recovery of health, and the depressing and even ruinous effect of anger, discontent, selfishness, or impurity, and, on the other hand, the marvelous lifegiving power to be found in cheerfulness, unselfishness, gratitude, should be shown" (Ed 197).

The mind expresses itself through the body. "Since the mind and the soul find expression through the body, both mental and spiritual vigor are in great degree dependent upon physical strength and activity; whatever promotes physical health, promotes the development of a strong mind and a well-balanced character. Without health, no one can as distinctly understand or as completely fulfill his obligations to himself, to his fellow-beings, or to his creator. Therefore the health should be as faithfully guarded as the character. A knowledge of physiology and hygiene should be the basis of all educational effort" (Ed 195).

**Know thyself.** "No one can properly understand his obligations to God unless he understands clearly his obligations to himself as God's property." "Perfect obedience to God's commands calls for conformity to the laws of the being" (CT 295). Let us read and reread such books as Ministry of Healing, Medical Ministry, Counsels on Health, Counsels on Diet and Foods, Temperance.

**Testimonies for the Church.** "The volumes of the Spirit of Prophecy, and also the Testimonies, should be introduced into every Sabbath-keeping family, and the brethren should know their value and be urged to read them. It was not the wisest plan to place these books at a low figure and have only one set in a church. They should be in the library of every family and read again and again. Let them be kept where they can be read by many, and let them be worn out in being read by all the neighbors.

**Evening readings; one should read aloud.** "There should be evening readings, in which one should read aloud to those assembled at the winter fireside. There is but little interest manifested to make the most of the light given of God. Much of it is concerning family duties, and instruction is given to meet almost every case and circumstance" (4T 390-1).

**Testimonies more important as end nears.** "As the end draws near and the work of giving the last warning to the world extends, it becomes more important for those who accept present truth to have a clear understanding of the nature and influence of the Testimonies, which God in His providence has linked with the work of the third angel's message from its very rise" (5T 654). See also SD 178.

**Satan's special object.** "It is Satan's special object to prevent this light from coming to the people of God, who so greatly need it amid the perils of these last days" (5T 667).

**Under the discipline of God.** "Everyone who has a knowledge of the truth should awake and place himself, body, soul, and spirit, under the discipline of God. The enemy is on our track. We must be wide awake, on our guard against him. We must put on the whole armor of God. We must follow the directions given through the spirit of prophecy. We must love and obey the truth for this time. This will save us from accepting strong delusions. God has spoken to us through His word. He has spoken to us through the testimonies to the church and through the books that have helped to make plain our present duty and the position that we should now occupy. The warnings that have been given, line upon line, precept upon precept, should be heeded. If we disregard them, what excuse can we offer?" (8T 298).

**Read of mission lands and missions.** "It is acquaintance that awakens sympathy, and sympathy is the spring of effective ministry. To awaken in the children and youth sympathy and the spirit of sacrifice for the suffering millions in the 'regions beyond,' let them become acquainted with these lands and their peoples. In this line much might be accomplished in our schools. Instead of dwelling on the exploits of the Alexanders and Napoleons of history, let the pupils study the lives of such men as the apostle Paul and Martin Luther, as Moffat and Livingstone and Carey, and the present daily-unfolding history of missionary effort. Instead of burdening their memories with an array of names and theories that have no bearing upon their lives, and to which, once outside the schoolroom, they rarely give a thought, let them study all lands in the light of missionary effort, and become acquainted with the people and their needs" (Ed 269).

**The Lord's builders.** "The enemy of righteousness left nothing undone in his effort to stop the work committed to the Lord's builders. But God 'left not Himself without witness.' Workers were raised up who ably defended the faith once delivered to the saints. History bears record to the fortitude and heroism of these men. Like the apostles, many of them fell at their post, but the building of the temple went steadily forward. The workmen were slain, but the work advanced. The Waldenses, John Wycliffe, Huss and Jerome, Martin Luther and Zwingle, Cramer, Latimer, and Knox, the Huguenots, John and Charles Wesley, and a host of others brought to the foundation material that will endure throughout eternity. And in later years those who have so nobly endeavored to promote the circulation of God's word, and those who by their service in heathen lands have prepared the way for the proclamation of the last great message --these also have helped to rear the structure."

"Paul and the other apostles, and all the righteous who have lived since then, have acted their part in the building of the temple. But the structure is not yet complete. We who are living in this age have a work to do, a part to act" (AA 598, 599). See also 1T 371-4.

**Bunyan.** "In a loathsome dungeon crowded with profligates and felons, John Bunyan breathed the very atmosphere of heaven; and there he wrote his wonderful allegory of the pilgrim's progress from the land of destruction to the celestial city. For over two hundred years that voice from Bedford jail has spoken with thrilling power to the hearts of men. Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners" have guided many feet into the path of life.

**Baxter, Flavel, Alleine,** and other men of talent, education, and deep Christian experience, stood up in valiant defense of the faith which was once delivered to the saints. The work accomplished by these men, proscribed and outlawed by the rulers of this world, can never perish. Flavel's "Fountain of Life" and "Method of Grace" have taught thousands how to commit the keeping of their souls to Christ. Baxter's "Reformed Pastor" has proved a blessing to many who desired a revival of the work of God, and his "Saints' Everlasting Rest" has done its work in leading souls to the 'rest that remaineth' for the people of God" (GC 252-3).

**Wesley.** "While preaching the gospel of the grace of God, Wesley, like his Master, sought to 'magnify the law and make it honorable.' Faithfully did he accomplish the work given him of God, and glorious were the results which he was permitted to behold. At the close of his long life of more than four score years -- above half a century spent in itinerant ministry -- his avowed adherents numbered more than half a million souls. But the multitude that through his labors had been lifted from the ruin and degradation of sin to a higher and purer life, and the number who by his teaching had attained to a deeper and richer experience, will never be known till the whole family of the redeemed shall be gathered into the kingdom of God. His life presents a lesson of priceless worth to every Christian. Would that the faith and humility, the untiring zeal, selfsacrifice, and devotion of this servant of Christ, might be reflected in the churches of today!" (GC 264).

**History.** "There is a study of history that is not to be condemned. Sacred history was one of the studies in the schools of the prophets. In the records of His dealings with the nations were traced the footsteps of Jehovah. So today we are to consider the dealings of God with the nations of the earth. We are to see in history the fulfillment of prophecy, to study the workings of Providence in the great reformatory movements, and to understand the progress of events in the marshalling of the nations for the final conflict of the great controversy.

"Such study will give broad, comprehensive views of life. It will help us to understand something of its relations and dependencies, how wonderfully we are bound together in the great brotherhood of society and nations, and to how great an extent the oppression and degradation of one member means loss to all" (MH 441-2).

Try beginning with these: The Great Controversy, Wylie's History of Protestantism, D'aubigue's History of the Reformation.

**True stories.** True secular stories of good character, are not mentioned as such, it would appear, but are covered by such general expressions as "the very best material" and the like. The warnings against true stories apply only to those of an objectionable character.

**Nature a key.** "In the natural world, God has placed in the hands of the children of men the key to unlock the treasure-house of His word. The unseen is illustrated by the seen" (CT 187).

"So full of beauty, so perfect."

"Well do we know of Ellen White as the Lord's messenger; but are our eyes "holden" (Luke 24:16) to her literary stature? On history's long roster of women writers, her name stands, we may feel sure, without a peer. Excepting the Bible, her writings are the greatest literary force for good in the world. Who can estimate their influence in America and other lands? Should we not realize the worth of the treasure entrusted to us? See what a scholar said to a class in literature:

"Of all the writings, ancient, medieval, or modern, there are no writings so full of beauty, so perfect in every way, so pure, and yet so simple, outside of the Bible, as the writings of Mrs. E. G. White." Miss E. McMillan, as quoted by Eld. Harold N. Williams, a member of the class.

How was it that a frail, unschooled child of the common people, member of a tiny group, cast out, poor, unknown, should capture the full temperament and proportions of the gospel message, so that her writings continue the great central stream of the Christian evangel, that has flowed down the centuries? How did she achieve such an unfailing avoidance of side channels and delusions? Such a full balance and control of the mental faculties? Such sureness of touch? Whence came the enthusiasm of utterance, the glowing faith, that never ceased? Her writings, how did she encompass their rich qualities: the perfect balance between doctrine and conduct; a passion for the lost which saw in every soul the purchase of Christ's blood; a steadfast, lofty morality which yet leaves the imagination its full stature; a union of seriousness and simplicity; and above these, an all-suffusing love for God, for His appearing and kingdom? What made her the voice of the honest in heart everywhere -- those who will come out of the world for conscience' sake, and for the word of God will suffer the loss of all things? It was the "finger of God." The hand of the Lord was upon her, and her life of untiring ministry was nourished by the Bible and by prayer.

"Should BECOME acquainted." "There are books that are of vital importance that are not looked at by our young people. They are neglected because they are not so interesting to them as some lighter reading.

"We should advise the young to take hold of such reading matter as recommends itself for the upbuilding of Christian character. The most essential points of our faith should be stamped upon the memory of the young. They have had a glimpse of these truths, but not such an acquaintance as would lead them to look upon their study with favor. Our youth should read that which will have a healthful, sanctifying effect upon the mind. This they need in

order to be able to discern what is true religion. There is much good reading that is not sanctifying.

"Now is our time and opportunity to labor for the young people. Tell them that we are now in a perilous crisis, and we want to know how to discern true godliness. Our young people need to be helped, uplifted, and encouraged, but in the right manner; not, perhaps as they would desire it, but in a way that will help them to have sanctified minds. They need good sanctifying religion more than anything else."

"In the night season I was selecting and laying aside books that are of no advantage to the young. We should select for them books that will encourage them to sincerity of life, and lead them to the opening of the word. This has been presented to me in the past, and I thought I would get it before you and make it secure. We cannot afford to give to young people valueless reading. Books that are a blessing to mind and soul are needed. These things are too lightly regarded; therefore our people should become acquainted with what I am saying" (FE 547-8). Also in MYP 287-8.

"We made it a practice to read instructive and interesting books, with the Bible, in the family circle, and our children were always happy as we thus entertained them. Thus we prevented a restless desire to be out in the street with young companions, and at the same time cultivated in them a taste for solid reading. . . . The volumes of "Spirit of Prophecy,"\* should be in every family, and should be read aloud in the family circle. . . . The Testimonies contain instruction which meets the case of all, both parents and children. Should these be read to the entire family, the children as well as the parents would be benefited by their counsels, warnings, and reproofs. . . . Let the time be devoted to the reading of the Scriptures and other interesting books that will impart knowledge and inculcate right principles. Let the best reader be selected to read aloud, while the other members of the family are engaged in useful occupations. Thus these evenings at home may be made both pleasant and profitable.

\*The Conflict of the Ages series replaced this four-volume set.

"Children need proper reading, which will afford amusement and recreation, and not demoralize the mind or weary the body.

"Most children and young people will have reading matter; and if it is not selected for them, they will select it for themselves. They can find a ruinous quality of reading anywhere, and they soon learn to love it; but if pure and good reading is furnished them, they will cultivate a taste for that.

"By practicing right-doing, a disgust will be created in the heart for that which is low, cheap, disorderly.

"Pure healthful reading will be to the mind what healthful food is to the body. You will thus become stronger to resist temptation, to form right habits, and to act upon right principles" (SD 178).

## Attendance to Reading 2

### 4. Help on Literary Problems

**Good and bad intermingled in literature.** Of himself man cannot produce anything that is absolutely good or perfect. Such a result is impossible because human nature is depraved. By Adam's sin man's faculties became deranged beyond the power of all human therapies to restore. "Our natures are fallen and we cannot change them." Every merely human work of hand or brain must, therefore, embody some degree of defect or shortcoming or error; of no one may we say, See, here is a flawless painting or poem or deed, utterly right. This is a guiding maxim in dealing with things secular. From this self-evident truth, it follows that studying any subject from secular books means dealing to some extent with that which is objectionable or imperfect and being under the necessity of distinguishing between the perfect and the imperfect or the good and the bad. At the risk of seeming to insist on the obvious, we should emphasize this basic fact.

It is manifest that negative defects resulting from human frailty and limitations are very different from positive defects where truth or morality are opposed. Subjects, too, will differ greatly in these respects. The content of some, as arithmetic or chemistry, may seem almost free of defect. Others, like biology, psychology, literature, are chosen fortresses, from which attacks, powerful and subtle, are made by the evil one. The problem of the teacher of literature, then, does not differ in kind from those of Christian teachers of other secular subjects, though it may differ in degree. All have to deal at least to some extent with mingled materials. **A problem.** "There is need of separating from our educational work an erroneous, polluted literature, so that ideas which are the seeds of sin will not be received and cherished as the truth" (CT 389). "Through the drama" Satan "has worked for ages to excite passion and glorify vice" (PP 459). "Novels should not find a place in the homes of those who believe in Christ" (ML 89). "Put away every novel" (MYP 286). "We do not need novels" (CW 147). Though some are not of as dangerous a character as others, "all are pernicious in their influence" (2T 236). "The readers of fiction are indulging an evil that destroys spiritually, eclipsing the beauty of the sacred page" (MYP 272).

It is not to be thought of that some of the instructions to the church, difficult though they may seem, were to be neglected or ignored. Through the Spirit of Prophecy God has ministered to raise up His remnant people and shape their work. Through it, we believe, He is still speaking, telling us how to avoid danger and to do acceptable work. Rightly understood and followed, these inspired instructions lead to success. We have been warned against neglecting them or explaining them away. We have been assured that God means what He says (1T 518).

But how shall the Adventist teacher and student keep in good conscience toward God's counsels, such as the foregoing, and at the same time carry on satisfactorily some of the prescribed courses in literature? Can one teach what he has not read? Can students become prepared to pass examinations in modern literature without studying at least some of the leading novels of the period? How can the instructions be carried out? To teachers, students,

parents, administrators, these are pressing questions. **Suggested solution.** Experience shows that it is not necessary to read novels or drama in order to teach modern literature and to prepare students to pass national examinations year after year. From other, better books one may get information that makes it possible to deal passably with an author's writings, principles, character, rank, and the like. What are these books?

Scholarly works have been prepared having to do with practically every writer of note in the world of letters, so that a more or less extensive literature as to an author, his writings, and the age in which he lived, is available for study. These works have been produced by men of reputation and scholastic attainments, who rank as specialists and authorities, having spent years to become expert about some novelist, dramatist, poet, movement, or period in literature, as Jonson, Keats, Hardy, the Victorian Era, Naturalism. A lifetime would not suffice us to equal their combined knowledge of all the writers exhibited in a gallery of literature so extensive as the English. For convenience these works may be divided into four classes:

a. Source materials, as autobiographies, letters, journals, records of conversations, reminiscences, nonfiction which the author may have produced.

b. History and biography, as social and political histories; histories of the literature of a period; studies in the history of thought; together with a range of biographies that view a life in both light and shadow and with different perspectives and points of view; volumes of profiles of modern writers, as *American Novelists of Today*, which presents 575 novelists.

c. Literary criticism, as dissertations and other research papers, familiar essays and studies; scholarly studies of the novel and its development by types and periods; studies of the drama; critical articles and monographs dealing with the writer, his different works, listing and grouping them in order, with his technique, his theories, social, political, religious, philosophical, and the like; critical appraisals in periodical literature.

d. Reviews and digest, as the many-volume series *Book Review Digest*, to which a new volume is added yearly; *Helen Keller's Reader's Digest of Books*, which contains digest of more than 2,000 selected books; *Frank N. Magill's Masterplots*, in two volumes, with analyses of more than 500 books; *New York Times Book Review*; the *Saturday Review*; the *Times (London) Literary Supplement*; and others. In these digests and reviews one finds typically such data concerning a given work as the following:

Author's full name

Date of publication

Locale

Time of the action

Dramatis personae

Leading character or characters

Synopsis of the action

Penetrating comments on the thesis, spirit, style, etc.

Type of novel -- or drama or other work

From such reference works teachers may draw help in compiling material to be duplicated for students' notebooks as a model to guide in study and for

help in reviewing, as a profile and critical estimate of a writer, with titles of some of his chief productions. To such reference works students may be sent to prepare assignments and develop projects. For example, an assignment may require students to prepare a similar profile on a selected writer; another may require the preparation of a summary of critical opinion of a book. And many others, as a definition of a movement, with note of its scope and results; identification and influence of a school of thought or writers. During the recitation hour the results of the students' work may be compared, discussed, appraised. Here is a wealth of material, more than one can find time for in any class.

This plan sets an example of regard for the counsel to the church; it conserves time. And the knowledge students thus acquire is better than what they could gain from reading several of one writer's novels. It is broader, many sided, presenting both pros and cons; it is the product of various minds. And while one by no means accepts all the evaluations there expressed, yet, all in all, it is a somewhat searching, critical estimate, which may serve both students and teachers as a basis for further study by providing something besides the teacher's personal statement or the student's inexperienced judgment.

It is a logical and common practice in literary study to go to these sources for information. What kind of man was the novelist or dramatist? What of the times in which he lived? What about his origins, environment, education, principles, etc? These natural questions, having to do with the man and his age, direct us to works such as those cited. But Adventist teachers and students can make a wider, more discriminating and effective use of them, grateful that they have been made ready and are at hand. Here is a mine to be worked more skillfully. Here are to be found facts that, properly selected and put in their due setting, help support sound evaluations of the writers and their works. Here is a work for us to do. All this may well receive emphasis.

We do not read books on magic or on the technique of the spiritist medium or on card playing, for example. Instead, we inform ourselves, so that we can warn men effectively against these evils. We may use the same principle in dealing with other objectionable books.

Manifestly, he who does not read the novel will miss many details that he who does read will get. This apparent handicap is to be accepted, just as the faithful have accepted seeming handicaps elsewhere - the conscientious student who accepts the missing of Sabbath classes; the mechanic who accepts loss of wages because of refusing to join a labor union or to desecrate the Sabbath; the merchant who accepts loss of income because of closing his shop on the Sabbath.

The evil one always has put obstacles in the path of obedience. But the good conscience preserved by hearty obedience and the favor of God make seeming disadvantages to become sources of blessing. They provide occasions, too, for God to bear witness for His children and through them. It was so with Joseph, with Moses, with Daniel. It is so now.

"Those who would have that wisdom which is from God must become fools in the sinful knowledge of this age, in order to be wise. They should shut their eyes, that they may see and learn no evil. They should close their ears,

lest they hear that which is evil and obtain that knowledge which would stain their purity of thoughts and acts. And they should guard their tongues, lest they utter corrupt communications and guile be found in their mouth" (AH 404).

**Distinctive work.** "God would have His people distinguished from the world in all things" (CW 122). See also 4T 580-1. In the teaching of the humanities, as in other things, the Seventh-day Adventist is to do a distinctive work. Teaching being one of the gifts of the Spirit, in literature, as elsewhere, the Adventist teacher is to leave the characteristic impress, decidedly apparent, of a Heaven appointed message and mission. Not of accident is it that the Bible is a work of consummate literary art. The other inspired writings also exhibit a literary power that ranks them, generally speaking, above secular works and next to the Bible. These facts may suggest the leadership to which we teachers are called--leadership not only in presenting the Bible as an unrivaled literary work but also leadership in the teaching of the best in secular literature. "It (the teaching in our schools) is not to be of an inferior order" (CT 539).

This identification includes more than the influence of a trained mind and a good character. "Our work is reformatory" (6T 126). We are to replan, reorganize, rebuild; to make vital changes. In our work in the classroom, the student is to see error and falsehood displaced. Morality is to be enthroned. And truth also, its parts being rescued from rubbish heaps, from centuries of neglect and abuse and restored to their proper setting, so that all may shine forth in native beauty and majesty. Sometimes we must hew through jungle to reach the old path, the good way, and uncover the ancient foundations to build on. It is not acceptable to be mere followers of custom: God calls His people to be wise leaders. Nor can the work be done once for all: it requires ceaseless effort. Like Nehemiah, we are ever to be alert to resist wily deceptions and devoted to the work of reconstruction. What "excellent things in counsels" God has sent to give good judgment, zeal, perseverance for this assignment of restoration. We suggest four things in which our teaching of literature is to be "distinguished": aim; methods; materials; evaluations.

**Aim.** Our aim is composite: (a) to develop literary appreciation and to teach literary principles and techniques; (b) to teach literary biography and history; (c) to enrich and broaden the mind as a means to the development of character, of fitness for translation. The student is to be led to obtain comprehensive views of the great lessons of life -- lessons of duty, of happiness; to see God's agency in the affairs of men -- the workings of Providence in the rise and fall of movements in the history of thought; to understand something of life's relationships and dependencies and of how wonderfully men are knit together in the great fabric of society. The attractions of truth, of noble language, of lofty imagery, of the poetic gift, with its mystery and its beauty and its power, are to be so presented that the student may gain power to recognize and choose what is excellent.

We did not originate our aim; we received it (ED 225). While it is addressed to every soul, and while it applies to all activity, yet it speaks especially to all who teach. Being fundamental, it claims a commanding voice in all we do. Everything is to be tested by it and made to conform. It is to come first in every proposed activity. It means a "singleness of mind and a peculiarity

of training" not in accord with popular ideas. This Heaven-born aim, ever in our hearts and plans, would in itself set us apart as followers of Jesus.

**Methods.** Methods are vitally related to our aim. Only those methods should be used, manifestly, which support and help toward our objective. To do otherwise would be to work at cross purposes. Our aim excludes automatically every method and device that uses the motive of self-aggrandizement, that uses rivalry of competition (Ed 226). All plans for the student, rather, are to be designed to lead him to choose self-improvement as a life principle and to get training in it -- continual growth in power, in useful knowledge, in humility, in ministry. It is impressive to note that specific counsel has been given as to even the methods we should not use. "Christ taught in a way altogether different from ordinary methods, and we are to be laborers together with Him" (6T 153).

**Materials.** It would be absurd to propose that teachers should require students to read in their entirety all the writings listed under English literature. But the absurdity can bring vividly before us a principle that needs great emphasis, the principle of selection. Necessity forces every teacher of such literature to limit the area to be covered; to choose among writers and writings; in a word, to select. In the realm of literature, then, selecting is not a questionable classroom procedure. On the contrary, it is universal, unavoidable. Limitations of time and capacity make it compulsory. It may not be a fault to seem to labor the point. One should not think of selection as a hurtful restriction, but rather as it actually is, an expression of enlightenment, "the freedom and advantage of a superior way." To our Christian objective in this field, moreover, selection is of double importance. It is a fundamental of right education. Learning to select wisely is a valuable foundation element to be built into character in childhood and youth. In teaching literature, it is for us to make a larger, more discriminating use of this indispensable principle -- selection.

What material shall we select? And how much? Since the church has been instructed to impart literary training in its schools; also instructed about the kinds of writers and works to avoid, it is plainly our duty to omit what has been condemned and to choose the best from the remainder. Even that will have some undesirable elements, and we shall be under duty to separate as well as we can between the good and the bad. The need for this restricted range, mentioned in FE 445-6 and elsewhere, may be expressed by using Carlyle's words to say that studying secular literature "consists, as it were, in sifting huge rubbish-mounds and choosing, ever with more or less error, what is golden and vital."

To the question of what to select, let us suggest this as the foundation for an answer: choose from the least objectionable of those writers and writings which we have not been warned against. Choose from the best a writer has produced. Choose on the basis of moral and literary excellence, not on that of reputation or literary tradition. This question, however, raises an issue, one which concerns more than literature. It is whether we, parents, teachers, administrators, writers, shall select according to literary authorities or whether we shall lay out a different course as charted by the Spirit of Prophecy. Some feel that this would confine us within too narrow limits and prevent that broad culture which comes from acquaintance with the world's famous writers. Let us

choose the narrower path; for here, let us say, we are confronted with a form of the "dilemma posed in Eden": obey and live; or eat of the forbidden tree and become as gods, knowing good and evil.

Some objectionable writers, productions, and classes of writers and writings, are specifically mentioned, to make more sure that we shall clearly understand as we study and seek to apply the counsels and warnings generally. In choosing writers and writings, let us ask, Were his over-all life interests and influence on the side of righteousness and truth? Does this selection provide "solid," "substantial reading," "encourage sincerity of life," "have a healthful, sanctifying effect on the mind?" In doubtful cases, let us lean to the safe side. Choice in reading, as in food and dress, is an individual responsibility. To choose well, we need first, doubtless, a desire to do God's will, a knowledge of the counsels, and a mind guided by the Spirit. We "are to be models of correctness in all relations of life" (FE 419).

It has been said that acquaintance with the world's great minds and books imparts culture. But "it is not necessary, in order to obtain culture, to read the folly, error, or wickedness of writers great or small. Our solution is to make a small selection of approved works for study -- pearls on a string. It includes selections from reputed masters whom yet we do not recommend wholly. It finds many a jewel in authors less noted but truly worthy. Our task is to finish the work committed to the church. What education is best for us? Granting that a social and intellectual culture may accrue from wide reading, we ask ourselves how much time we may consistently spend on this in view of the fitness we need for our mission. For we have not the objective of the world, and what fits the worldling does not fit us. We are in Operation Advent, and it requires a discipline not in accord with the routine of the world." In our courses in literature have we made appropriate use of selections from the Ellen White writings?

**And how much?** Choose less, much less than is customary. For a hundred years the enormous literary output has kept increasing the pressure in the courses, to cover more in a given time. All feel this pressure. Usually we ourselves lay out too much for courses and assignments. But bad as it is in itself, attempting too much means to impair the very special work we are to do. Teachers need more time than those in secular schools, even as our aim is higher and our task one which calls for more original work, nice discrimination, prayerful planning. History and science are mainly a record of the world without. Literature is mainly a record of the world within. Great literature, "the literature of power," is dynamic. Rightly administered, it means not only increase in knowledge but transformation. Our supreme concern is to bring about growth in the student -- mental, naturally; more important, spiritual. Growth takes time. "The efficiency of a school of literature depends on the mastering of a few good books."

If these choice selections be thought of as pearls on a string, let the "strings" be formed of comprehensive outlines, biographical and historical, specially prepared by us, each historical one covering, say, a social or political epoch but including great movements in thought, in philosophy, religion, the arts, developments in government, science, etc., as well as the fortunes of battle in the struggle between good and evil, that the student may see the relation of a

writer to what were then issues in the conflict. Very high is the place such orienting outlines deserve. They register graphically the stamp we place on a writer, a literary movement. The preparation of such distinctive outlines is richly rewarding and lays claim to one's best efforts.

**Evaluations.** It is impossible to evaluate without a measure of value. What the right standard is for evaluating literature has been a controversial matter. It may be set as low as mere personal preference, or it may rise to the height of an established, permanent, universal rule. Personal preference, plainly, is not the answer; for that would spell annihilation of the concept of a general rule. There would then be, instead, as many "standards" conceivably as there are human beings -- and each one "right."

Does an enduring literary standard exist? Evolution answers No. "There is nothing changeless but change." In keeping with this idea, literature is almost universally presented in our age as a record of inevitable progression.

If there is a changeless standard as to good and bad in literature, on what does it rest? Does it rest on the canons of literary art exclusively as claimed in the dictum: "Every work of art is to be judged solely by the laws of the art which produced it"? Or does such a standard rest on two laws: first, the canons of morality; then, the canons of art? Literature has two parts: content and form -- ideas and their artistic expression. And its purpose is twofold: to inform and to uplift. Can a piece of literature be truly moral if it embodies no worthy thought? To the Christian standard, thought is always the first thing; execution always the second.

As Adventist teachers, our purpose is not humanistic, not merely literary, but spiritual. Though we must deal with materials where good and bad are somewhat intermingled, yet we are not to think of our work as an almost sinful necessity. There is a Christian way to do whatever should be done. As our objective is first of all spiritual, so our distinguishing standard for evaluating is first of all moral as determined by the Bible and its elaboration by the Spirit of Prophecy. This scriptural test is above all other tests, important though they are, as, for example, that of true or false; for there are recitals of bloodshed, crime, indecency, which are true to fact yet wholly evil. That a piece of literature be acceptable as measured by this great moral standard committed to the keeping of the church, is to our great objective the consideration supreme.

Guiding students in literary study means a responsibility to be alert to deal with unwarrantable omissions, emphases, definitions, interpretations, appraisals, conclusions, as they may appear -- defects which may result from limited or mistaken views, from prejudice, from intent to villify or deceive and which the untrained reader may not recognize or correct.

In a special sense we are in the world to bear witness to truth. In our field, we are to serve by setting it up anew where it has been cast down. History and biography are continually being rewritten now as in former ages, as influenced by those who want the record to appear more to their liking. It is for us to redress men and movements in our field which have thus suffered at the hands of historians, biographers, and critics, as Wyclif, Puritanism, Bunyan, Wesley, Ruskin, to name a few.

We should serve on occasion by lifting up worthy names from neglect and obscurity. It is not ours to join in disparaging the poets and poetry of common life as such. We are to show how truth reverses unjust literary judgments. This being the world's spiritual midnight, when gross darkness enshrouds men's hearts, popular or critical approval does not necessarily coincide with our estimate as to moral values. Instead, it is often the opposite. The very goodness of some -- their reverence for the Bible, for Christian principles in control of daily conduct -- has caused them to be passed by or maligned. What students today hear of Jean Ingelow and her "Brothers and a Sermon" or "High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire" or the spiritual beauties of Lucy Larcom's "Prayer on the Mountain" or Lanier's "Ballade of Trees and the Master"?

The presses pour out an endless flood of books. Proficiency in the art of writing being comparatively widespread, many of these books are skillfully written, but the number of them with a good moral influence is very small. Literary polish, captivating phrases, compression, clarity -- qualities like these are not primary to the verdict we are to pass; for the livery of Heaven may be appropriated to clothe the "literature of Satan." Sin and error parade in glittering array. Should students be set to read a questionable book merely to become acquainted with the brilliant style of a popular writer? Our standard has to do with more than the absence of vicious elements. It requires a choice between things in themselves good. It asks, Will this help in reaching the goal? Will time spent here be put to the best use? "There is much good reading that is not sanctifying" (FE 547).

Christ "could have astonished the world with the great and glorious knowledge" He possessed; "yet He was reticent and uncommunicative" (FE 338). He "might have opened to men the deepest truths of science." "But He did not do this." In all His teaching, He "brought the mind of man in contact with the Infinite Mind." In this, He left us an example to follow.

"The mind, the heart, that is indolent, aimless, falls an easy prey to evil. It is on diseased, lifeless organisms that fungus roots. It is the idle mind that is Satan's workshop. Let the mind be devoted to high and holy ideals, let the life have a noble aim, and absorbing purpose, and evil finds little foothold." -- Education, p. 190.

"Children, I have a message for you. You are now deciding your future destiny, and your character building is of that kind which will exclude you from the Paradise of God. . . . How sad it is for Jesus, the world's Redeemer, to look upon a family where the children have no love for God, no respect for the word of God, but are all absorbed in reading storybooks. The time occupied in this way robs you of a desire to become effective in household duties; it disqualifies you to stand at the head of a family, and if continued it will entangle you more and more closely in Satan's snare. . . . Some of the books you read contain excellent principles, but you read only to get the story. If you would gather from the books you read that which would help you in the formation of your character, your reading would do you some good. But as you take up your books and peruse page after page of them, do you ask yourself, What is my object in reading? Am I seeking to gain substantial knowledge? You cannot build a right character by bringing to the foundation wood, hay, and stubble." --

## 5 Definitions: Their Importance

"But what do the words mean? It's all a question of definition. It all depends on what you mean by the word."

These words or their equivalent constitute the response commonly heard when mention is made of the Spirit of Prophecy counsels against the reading of novels, stories, tales, and other fiction. The definition of words being the foundation on which this far-reaching assertion rests, one may feel justified in giving much time to studying definition making and the definitions of key words here. Definitions are obviously fundamental, being absolutely essential to clear communication.

**Definitions.** The making of exact definitions is not without its difficulties. In English there are half a million words but millions of meanings. Most words, consequently, are made to carry more than one. Common words often carry many. Slip has 30; run has 60. It is necessary to distinguish between these as the word is in use. Words change their meaning, lose old ones, take on new. To define such a word correctly, it is necessary to know when the passage was written and give the meaning the word then had. The personal element tends to enter and color the definition. It is hard to exclude it wholly. To some, home means a little heaven; to some, a hell. Some languages have no word even for our idea of home. Rarely used, concrete words of a single meaning, like kiwi or ampersand, are easy to define. Many common ones are hard. Some have successfully defied full definition, as poetry, life. Others are so vaguely bounded as to remain actually undefined, as realism, romanticism.

How many volumes have been written on philosophy, theology, metaphysics, for example, which are little more than a barren waste of verbal subtlety -- fine-spun, labored distinctions, almost devoid of life and light. And how unlike all that is the language of inspiration. Most refreshing is the contrast it presents. And surprising. One searches the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy almost in vain for an example of logical definition of a word. He finds appositives, identifications, synonyms, but few full definitions, only fragments. And they are scattered apparently at random. The inspired writers show what seems a careless regard for definition, for the appearance of consistency and order. What variations in the gospels, in the Lord's Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount, in the wording of the parables and of quotations. After eighteen centuries of study, Christian scholars cannot be positive as to even the chronological order of events in Christ's public ministry.

It is with definitions as with doctrines. The same principle is seen: no doctrine or meaning can be safely based on one text alone. For viewed in isolation, a single text is easily perverted and made to lead to wrong conclusions. A different rule has been laid down: comparison is to be made and a rounded whole carefully developed through a study of scattered parts. Holy men having written under divine guidance, we may believe that this characteristic of the inspired writings is significant, not accidental but intentional. It is in part the means by which God has placed His signature upon these communications through the principle of design, an attestation of their

authenticity. It cannot be counterfeited. And one is compelled to study if he gets the truth. It is God's purpose that men shall study and compare, then decide as to doctrine or meaning on the weight of evidence. See Ed 123-4.

God's message to men was not made dependent on subtlety of definition. The truths of revelation are not committed to a particular vocabulary, the special possession of the expert or the learned. Instead, they are in plain common language. And while the wisest cannot fathom the depths of its simple statements, yet the unlearned and the child can safely find the way. We should remember the important injunction: "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." We also should remember that the raising of doubts about definitions has been one chosen means of trying to parry the arrows of conviction and evade the claims of duty and truth. "But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29). Have observers been justified in saying that Seventh-day Adventists sometimes resort to "definition juggling" and "label shifting" when confronted with their disregard of the Spirit of Prophecy?

**Fiction.** The words "fiction" and "novel" are among those used by the Spirit of Prophecy to identify literature that is condemned. Let us start with the Scriptures and approach the definition of "fiction" by noting first what it is not. Three kinds of language are used in the Bible:

Literal

Prophetic symbols

Rhetorical figures: tropes, similes, parables, etc.

**Literal:** "Lot journeyed east"; "Jesus wept." The word "literal" means: "according to the 'letter,' or the natural or usual construction and implication of a writing or expression; conformable to the most obvious intent"; "of the senses of words, conveying the primary meaning." Whenever a word is used literally, all its elements are employed.

Prophetic symbols we may omit here. But rhetorical figures need study to distinguish between the definitions of figures and those of "fiction."

**Figure.** In rhetoric, a peculiar or special use of words; employment of words in forms, combinations, or meanings different from those properly or ordinarily assigned to them; the use of certain forms of speech to produce a special effect. When a word is used figuratively, most of its meanings are ignored. Usually only a single element is borrowed."

**Trope.** A word or expression used in a different sense from that which properly belongs to it, or a word changed from its original signification to another for the sake of giving spirit or emphasis to an idea, as when we call a stupid man an ass or a shrewd man a fox. Tropes are chiefly of four kinds: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. But to these may be added allegory, prosopopoeia, hyperbole, antonomasia, and some others. Tropes are included under figures in a wider sense of that word. In a narrower sense, a trope is a change of meaning and a figure any ornament except what becomes so by such change."

**"Parable.** A comparison; similitude. An allegorical relation or representation from which a moral is drawn for instruction. Synonym: metaphor, comparison."

Although the Greeks and Romans classified and gave names to the figures of speech -- names still in use -- they did not originate the figures. One must go farther back to find their origin. In the morning of the world God used them in speaking to Cain, and later to Abraham and others. "Sin lieth at the door." "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth." "The earth hath opened her mouth." "A land flowing with milk and honey." "I bear you on eagles' wings." Figures enrich the writings of Moses, and John in vision heard the redeemed singing praise to the "Lamb." Figures of speech, or rhetorical figures, as they are called, have a noble origin. They are not essentially decorative but functional. The use of them springs from the nature of man's mind and its intrinsic modes and powers of expression.

Why were these expressions named "figures" of speech? What is the force of "figure" here? It means a body, an object, having shape or form. Rhetorical figures were so named because, typically, such an expression brings to the mind an image, a picture, a "figure" of a body or object and often action associated with it. Thus figures add to the force and impressiveness of language by causing the imagination to throw an image on the screen and focus attention upon it. They are visual aids for the eye of the mind. The "figure" seen usually has the shape of a body named, as "on eagles' wings," by which one visualizes the spread pinions of eagles in flight. But the figure may be produced by a set arrangement of words or phrases as in climax, where the terms of a series are arranged so that each succeeding one rises above its predecessor in force. If considered thoughtfully, this too creates an image -- that of an inclined ladder or staircase, with its gradual ascent to the top. Climax was taken into English without translation from the Latin and Greek, it being originally in those languages the common word for ladder or staircase. Thus climax is a true rhetorical figure. And it is not essentially the product of cleverness or vanity. Rather, it has universal appeal and power because it accords with an innate law of the mind -- a law to which attention may be further drawn by noting the reverse form in anticlimax to produce humorous or burlesque effects. Abstract ideas can be made concrete and vivid through the pictorial power of figures of speech. They point up the truth of the proverb: "One picture is worth ten thousand words."

**Metaphor** is the basic figure of speech and thus deserves particular attention. Sometimes metaphor is used as a loose synonym for figurative language in general, it being so closely related to other figures, as allegory, apostrophe, simile, and others. It is a "figure of speech in which a word or phrase is used in place of another by way of suggesting a likeness or analogy between them." Metaphor results from "using an object for the sake of one of its qualities and so making the whole a symbol of a part," as "The pure blood of the grape." "All flesh is grass." "The night has a thousand EYES."

Metaphors appear in infinite multitude and variety, as it were, on all levels of communication, from highest to lowest. "He is the Rock." "Or jealousy with rankling tooth." "Fast bound in chains of silence." "Put some teeth in the law." "Jug" for jail; "bull" for policeman.

But metaphors are common in the predicate as well as in the subject and occur in any of their modifiers. Metaphors are not confined to nouns and noun phrases; they appear in every part of speech except pronouns. Verb: "Why wade through error?" "The pestilence that walketh in darkness." Adverb: "I talked astray." "Sorely perplexed." Adjective: "Summer is dead." "My pet peeve." Preposition: "Dollars hidden in your telephone." Verbals: "Eyes blazing with anger." "Burnt with hunger." "Make the horn of David to bud." Interjection: "A red!"

**Allegory.** When both subject and predicate are metaphors, the sentence is an allegory. In origin and nature it is as simple as that. Allegories may be short, or long, being classified according to length as phrase, sentence, and extended. "Jack Frost pencils the windows" is a sentence allegory, the subject "Jack Frost" being a metaphor and the verb "pencils" being a metaphor. It could be changed to a phrase allegory by destroying the predication: "Jack Frost pencilling the windows." Allegories may be extended through sentences or paragraphs and may fill a volume, as *The Faerie Queene* or *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The length is incidental, having nothing to do with the nature of the work. The essential element is that the subject shall be a metaphor, the predicate likewise, and each consistent with the other. If they are not consistent, we have not allegory but mixed metaphor, as "Ambition watered the sparks of genius," instead of "Ambition fanned the sparks of genius." Sentence allegories are used more often than we suppose: "Nature reprieves no offenders." "No blood covers our doorposts." "Time had plowed his venerable front." "My cup runneth over." "The arrow of death may strike our hearts today."

Allegory and parable are the "highest communication of which speech is capable." The reason for this evaluation lies in the fact that using a metaphor in both the subject and the predicate lifts the sentence at once entirely out of the realm of the literal -- lifts the whole thought above the material plane. It is not that all allegories or parables convey great truths. That is not the thought of the evaluation. It is, rather, that allegory and parable are most effective means for "spiritualizing thought," which means rising above the single fact to the principle which supports and validates it -- rising above the fact toward the ideal of which the fact is but an inadequate, unsatisfactory representation.

**Parable** has during the ages been classified as a figure of speech. It partakes largely of the nature of allegory. The definition in the *Century Dictionary* reads: "1. A comparison; similitude. Specifically -- 2. An allegorical relation or representation from which a moral is drawn for instruction; an apologue." "Parable is a process of the same kind as metaphor or allegory because in all these an outer resemblance is accepted as evidence of inner identity, or as evidence that, though the objects which are associated differ outwardly, they mean the same in a higher sense. Each of these figures is a species of idealization." Parable is taken from and agrees with the material side of life and is designed to carry the mind to some spiritual conclusion. It is a means of coming closer to the spirit of an idea, of giving to abstract thought the effect and potency of the visible and the concrete. A thousand sermons could not have conveyed what the parable of the prodigal son conveys to the human mind as to the Father's attitude toward sinners.

"Jotham's parable" (Judges 9:8-15) points to the antiquity of this figure. At the opening of the Christian era, "parable-teaching was popular, and commanded the respect and attention, not only of the Jews, but of the people of other nations." But Jesus lifted the parable up to unmeasured heights of power, making it the vehicle of teachings instinct with divine energy, and causing it to be forever associated with His name. He used this means to teach the people because their interest "was aroused by figures drawn from the surroundings of their daily life." And "in parables He rebuked the hypocrisy and wicked works of those who occupied high positions, and in figurative language clothed truth of so cutting a character that had it been spoke in direct denunciation, they would not have listened to His words, and would have speedily put an end to His ministry." "No more effective method of instruction could He have employed" (COL 21-2).

Some have attempted to classify Jotham's parable and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus as fiction because of the nature of the conversation. Others have been influenced by this theory, and in their view it weakens or discredits most of the condemnation of fiction by the Spirit of Prophecy, saying, "There is fiction in the Bible." The first sentence on page 260 of Christ's Object Lessons begins: "In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus," and seven times more in the chapter the classification is repeated -- "parable." And the church has from age to age so classified it. God, foreseeing these attacks, directed to safeguard against this danger. Not only is this a parable, in "figurative language," we are told; but the writer, speaking directly to the point of attacks, says: "The conversation between Abraham and the once-rich man is figurative." The Saviour knew of the ideas of many of His hearers, and "He framed His parable so as to inculcate important truths through these preconceived opinions."

A parable is not fiction; it is unliteral. An allegory is not fiction; it is unliteral. Both are examples of unliteral language. All figures of speech except such as are made so by an arrangement of words, are unliteral; not fiction. To say that a parable is fiction is to utter an untruth. The statement has the appearance of intent to mislead. To call a parable fiction is as false and unreasonable as it is to call an hyperbole a lie or to call a metaphor blasphemy. Would one say that the Spirit inspired David to write a gross lie, Psalm 119:136? "Rivers of waters." What a monstrous falsehood! Shall we profess to misunderstand Job's irony (12:2)? No. To make statements such as these questions suggest would be to speak utmost absurdity. How astonishing such preposterousness would be in chemistry or physics. But in religion how easy to embrace the unreasonable.

**Fiction**, then does not mean parable or allegory or any other figure of speech. What does it mean? It has four meanings, given thus: "1. A feigning or imagining; as by a fiction of the mind. 2. That which is feigned or imagined; esp., a feigned or imagined story; a false statement. 3. Fictitious literature; specifically, novels. 4. Law. An assumption of a possible thing as a fact irrespective of the question of its truth." We have not found meaning 4 in the Ellen White writings, but 1 is employed in 2T 276. Meanings 1, 2, and 4, however, which she so seldom if ever used, never appear in the counsels concerning books and reading. There, she uses only meaning 3. The word

"fiction," then, as found in this connection, has always only the common literary meaning, "fictitious literature."

It was the Holy Spirit who indited David's hyperboles. Figures of speech - metaphors, similes, parables, ironies, and the like -- bear Heaven's stamp of approval: "He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures" (GC 7). But fictitious literature is condemned. Parable and "fiction" in the sense of fictitious literature, are distinct and separate. No sincere, informed person will ever call a parable fiction or say, "There is fiction in the Bible." For the statement is both untrue and specious, used because it is apparently though deceptively correct. Thus employed, it is calculated to mislead, to create doubt as to the validity of the instruction from the Spirit of Prophecy.

**Novel defined.** When attention is drawn to the condemnation of novels by the Spirit of Prophecy, the question is sometimes raised: "But what does the word mean here?" And in answer some take the position that since the novel had gone through a process of development during its life of a century and more when she first mentioned it, Ellen White did not mean to condemn the more modern works written with serious purpose and noble aim, as some novels of character, of criticism, of reform, and the like.

But rather that she had in mind only the old yellowbacks, the sensational dime novel, common in her earlier years, in which the interest lies only in romance, incident, dialog, the trivial, the low; so that Seventh-day Adventists should feel free to read "good" novels as works of ethical and cultural value. Let us now glance at the history of the novel in England and America.

"It is customary to date the first English novel with Richardson in 1740." The first century of its life was largely a time of development, the major part being played by Sir Walter Scott, who began the "flood of fiction," which has continued to the present. He created the historical novel and almost single-handedly achieved the popularization of literature by taking it from the control "of a few patrons and critics and putting it into the hands of the people as one of the forces which mold modern life." His romantic poems as one of the forces which mold modern life." His romantic poems and novels, faulty though they were technically, aroused intense enthusiasm and attracted thousands of readers "by their vigor, their freshness, their rapid action, and their breezy out-of-door atmosphere." After Scott's death in 1832, however, romanticism and the romantic approach lost favor as being overdone and staled. With the turn to realism in fiction, which took place shortly, plot and character study and motive and thought pattern came into the important place which they have held in the novel since that time.

For a hundred years the novel has remained fundamentally unchanged. It has varied superficially, as one should expect, to reflect popular ideas, viewpoints, and interests in war and peace, in religion, science, philosophy, and the like. Different ways of approach, different points of emphasis, new experiments in technique, have come and gone. But the great constant has been and is to treat imaginatively of human experience, character, personality, ideas, motives, fancies, in a plot. We see this fact mirrored in scholarly definition.

Let us repeat: during all the years, from her first published mention of the novel in 1856 to the present time, the definition and essential character of the novel have remained unchanged. One change, of course, has occurred -- a change which adds force to the warnings against it. It has naturally reflected and accelerated the steady, world-wide decline in morals which has marked the history of the past hundred years.

Was it once only that Ellen White wrote against the novel? And when was it that she bore such testimony? Not once only, but repeatedly. For fifty years and more, beginning in 1856, when the modern novel had become established, she wrote with undiminished disapproval, as shown by the references and dates given in this left-hand column:

**1T 135 (1856)**  
**2T 236, 410 (1868)**  
**3T 151-2 (1872)**  
**4T 497 (1879)**  
**FE 92 (1884)**  
**PP 459 (1890)**  
**FE 163 (1890)**  
**CW 147 (1899)**  
**7T 203 (1902)**  
**MYP 272 (1902)**  
**MYP 286 (1906)**  
**SD 325 (1906)**  
**MH 445-6 (1909)**  
**ML 89 (1911)**  
**CT 120-1 (1913)**

The names and titles below are listed merely to illustrate the fact that Ellen White was condemning the novel during its very golden age.

**Hawthorne The Scarlet Letter (1850)**  
**Thackeray Henry Esmond (1852)**  
**Flaubert Madam Bovary (1856)**  
**Eliot Silas Marner (1861)**  
**Hugo Les Miserables (1862)**  
**Hardy Far from the Madding Crd. (1874)**  
**Turgenev Virgin Soil (1876)**  
**Meredith The Egoist (1879)**  
**Howells A Modern Instance (1882)**  
**Tolstoi Anna Karenina (1886)**  
**Sienkiewicz With Fire and Sword (1890)**  
**Zola Rome (1896)**  
**Henry James The Wings of a Dove (1902)**  
**Galsworthy The Man of Property (1906)**  
**Conrad Under Western Eyes (1911)**

Who were these writers, these novelists, who were her contemporaries? Historians of literature and literary critics answer that they were master craftsmen. Of the multitude of novelists, they have been held to be among the

few who were the greatest and best. Theirs was the golden age of the novel. It was during such a period as this, the very half century in which these eminent novelists flourished, that Ellen White was commissioned to give the messages we are considering.

And the record is unmistakable as to the kinds of fiction which are condemned. Ellen G. White, it is clear, was aware that there is fiction of a better class and fiction of a worse class; that some novels are less pernicious and some more pernicious than others. "The world is flooded with novels of every description. Some are not of as dangerous a character as others. Some are immoral, low, and vulgar; others are clothed with more refinement; but all are pernicious in their influence" (2T 236). These distinctions, so carefully detailed here in 1868 and in later years, as in MH 444-6, were clearly set forth, so that the reader might find no place for honest doubt that "high-class" fiction is as specifically condemned as the low.

The range in time, too, is noteworthy. It was in 1868 that she wrote of the novel: "All are pernicious in their influence." Thirty-eight years later, in 1906, came these words: "Put away every novel" (MYP 286). In 1911 again: "Novels should not find a place in the homes of those who believe in Christ" (ML 89). And in 1913: "To those who feel free to read story magazines and novels I would say: You are sowing seed the harvest of which you will not care to garner" (CT 120). Thus throughout a period fifty-seven years long, which closed only two years before her death, she was inspired to condemn every class and quality of the novel. And the denunciations increased in frequency through the decades of her ministry.

"God did not, after giving us general directions, leave us to guess the way amid bypaths and dangerous passes." Instead, one finds in these counsels a wealth of instructive details:

"There are works of fiction that were written for the purpose of teaching truth or exposing some great evil. Some of these works have accomplished good. Yet they have also wrought untold harm" (MH 445). Uncle Tom's Cabin was such a book. "That book did good in its day to those who needed an awakening in regard to their false ideas of slavery." We see how very limited the "good" was, and how carefully restricted the group was to whom it applied. The man who received this testimony soon left the message and became its enemy. The reproof given him shows how wrong it is to use this testimony to try to find sanction for reading fiction:

"It seems wonderfully strange to me, considering all I have written in regard to the reading of exciting stories, to see a recommendation from your pen to read Robinson Crusoe, Uncle Tom's Cabin, and Aesop's Fables. My brother, you made a mistake in writing that article." "I was much surprised to read your recommendation of Uncle Tom's Cabin, Robinson Crusoe, and such books. You are in danger of becoming somewhat careless in your writing.

It would be well to give thought and careful study to whatever is to be immortalized in print. I am really alarmed to see that your spiritual eyesight is not more clear in the matter of selecting and recommending reading for our youth." "You (D. M. Canright) must be getting away from Jesus and His teachings and do not realize it" (5T 516-20).

**Story.** The Spirit of Prophecy uses the word "story" in most or all of its meanings, which facilitates understanding the counsels about literature. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines it as follows:

"1. a. A connected narrative of past events." It is so used in GW 208: "The story of Jesus' love."  
 "b. A history." So used in 4T 9: "The story of any person or people."  
 "2. a. An account of some incident." Such use in DA 177: "Nicodemus related to John the story of that interview."  
 "b. A report; statement." Used thus in 1T 258, 330, 334.  
 "c. An anecdote, esp., an amusing one." Used in GW 152: "He should not bring amusing stories into his preaching."  
 "3. In literature: (a). A narrative in either prose or verse: a tale; esp., a fictitious narrative less elaborate than a novel." Many instances.  
 "b. The plot of a narrative." This use in MH 446; "Reading merely for the story."

The use employed in these counsels on reading is, naturally, that of sense 3a: "A narrative in either prose or verse; a tale; esp., a fictitious narrative less elaborate than a novel." Sometimes the word is used in its loose meaning, for example, as a synonym for "religious novel," in MYP 272. But in these admonitions about pernicious literature, it is used in its strict literary meaning as, for example, a synonym for "tale," in CT 134. See also the accompanying quotations.

"Story" is used to refer to both the fictitious and the true story if the true is of objectionable character: "Little do parents consider that injurious impressions are far more readily received by the young than are divine impressions; . . . If their minds are filled with stories, be they true or fictitious, there is no room for the useful information and scientific knowledge which should occupy them. What havoc has this love for light reading wrought with the mind! How it has destroyed the principles of sincerity and true godliness, which lie at the foundation of a symmetrical character. It is like a slow poison taken into the system, which will sooner or later reveal its bitter effects. When a wrong impression is left upon the mind in youth, a mark is made, not on sand, but on enduring rock" (5T 544-5).

**Fictitious stories** are specifically condemned: "Idle stories are attentively read, while the Bible is neglected. This book is our guide to a higher, holier life. The youth would pronounce it the most interesting book they ever read had not their imagination been perverted by the reading of fictitious stories" (CT 139). Tales of fiction." "A love for fictitious reading should be overcome at once" (CT 136).

In some passages the writer speaks of all pernicious stories together as a larger group, without pausing to mention the fictitious and the true again by name, so that such general expressions refer, no doubt, both to true stories which are unacceptable in character and to fictitious stories:

"The practice of story reading is one of the means employed by Satan to destroy souls" (CT 134).

"Through the agency of novels and story magazines, Satan is working to fill with unreal and trivial thoughts, minds that should be diligently studying the word of God" (CT 121).

"It troubles me to see in Sabbath-keeping families periodicals and newspapers containing continued stories which leave no impressions for good on the minds of children and youth. I have watched those whose taste for fiction was thus cultivated" (CT 132).

"Love stories, frivolous and exciting tales, and even that class of books called religious novels -- books in which the author attaches to his story a moral lesson -- are a curse to the readers. Religious sentiments may be woven all through a story-book, but, in most cases, Satan is but clothed in angel-ropes, the more effectively to deceive and allure. None are so confirmed in right principles, none so secure from temptation, that they are safe in reading these stories" (MYP 272).

**Stories in verse.** Are the messages we are studying intended to include stories in verse? Objectionable poems of this kind, long or short, are fully covered by such general expressions as "romance," "frivolous and exciting tales," "immoral," "trashy," and others. Long narrative poems come up for consideration in the classroom. They occur only in the literature of the past and are comparatively few in number. "The Canterbury Tales," "Idylls of the King," "Evangeline" may be cited. In seeking to apply the instructions to poems, two considerations may be helpful:

Character of the poem, the author's purpose, and so on.

Age level of the student.

Most of them do not rate an assignment. Some that need notice on upper levels can be dealt with by comment and explanation or sample reading. The romances of the Dark Ages, which practically comprised European literature for centuries, are plainly excluded by their character; also, in the main, the tales which have been retold from them.

In our teaching, we have not used the tales from "The Canterbury Tales," but only the "Prologue," where Chaucer revealed himself and his skill by sketching his English contemporaries in memorable vignettes. "The Faerie Queene" we have viewed briefly, noting its symbolism, the quaint style, the scriptural allusions, the tone, as revelations of the poet's mind. Sample reading of only a short poem or two to illustrate Scott's love of romantic ballads and old tales, in which his mind had been steeped from childhood. No study assignments, only the reading of illustrative passages, from Wordsworth's long poems; but study of "Michael," "Old Cumberland Beggar," "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," and other short ones. For the "Idylls of the King" two or three assignments, perhaps "The Lady of Shallot" for lyricism and the "Passing of Arthur," where the poet seeks to impress the stamp of the modern mind. "The Princess," outdated by its theme, is no longer read. Older students might read "Enoch Arden" and study "Northern Farmer," "Dora," "Rizpah," and others, as expressions of Tennyson's interest in ethical and sociological matters, especially "The Palace of Art." None of Browning's long poems, as "The Ring and the Book," "Sordello," but study of his short dramatic monologues, as "Andrea Del Sarto," "My Last Duchess," "The Bishop Orders His Tomb," "Rabbi Ben Ezra," "The Grammarian's Funeral," and the like.

We would not devote time on lower levels to a study of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," to cite another example, despite the music of its lines. But college students, learning of the part acted by Coleridge and Wordsworth in bringing psychology into modern literature, could briefly study Coleridge's effort in "The Rime" to produce the effect of a powerful hallucination. "The Pennsylvania Pilgrim," considered Whittier's most highly finished and greatest narrative poem, deals sympathetically with the history and influence of the Quakers in early American life. "Snowbound," breathing the atmosphere of the poet's boyhood home and the influence of his loved sister, is a wholesome poem. Younger students and children should enjoy some of the beautiful passages and noble sentiments of "Evangeline" and other wholesome narrative poems, especially the shorter ones, as "The Cotter's Saturday Night," "The Village Blacksmith," "The Bell of Atri," and others.

Secular poetry as such is not mentioned, so far as is known, in the Ellen White writings. But narratives in verse, as in prose, are fully covered by our "marching orders."

With respect to other authors, as Sidney, Shakespeare, Jonson, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Byron, and others, it has been our plan in the classroom not to omit any major writer represented in the anthology being used, but to consider each one and his work -- whether poetry or prose -- as time allowed, in accordance with the general plan presented in chapter four.

What, then, are we to think about definitions and meanings? In the official writings of Mrs. E. G. White are words used correctly? Did she choose discriminatingly when using multiple-meaning words? Are her utterances, as well as those of the prophets, positive, assured? Or, on the contrary, is her meaning left uncertain, to be decided by the reader's opinion, so that one is justified in saying: "It's all a matter of definition. It depends on what you mean by the word"?

God spoke to and through the seers. He gave the ability to write them out. The one is as truly essential as the other. Both were required. If the prophets used words that did not convey the very truth God had revealed, then His purpose was defeated. In such case, it was not His message which men received from the messenger, but something different. The prophet's communication, however, was not at all like that; it was the very opposite: "that which was written was upright, even words of truth."

"God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was intrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, none the less, from Heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth" (GC 8, 9, Edition of 1950).

We apply this to Moses and Isaiah. It applies as certainly to Mrs. E. G. White, whose prophetic ministry has been as truly authenticated as has that of any Bible writer. To deny the application to her is to take the same position about the Spirit of Prophecy writings as did the "higher critics" about the text of

the Bible, dissecting, rejecting, accepting, correcting "mistakes," assigning meanings and origins. Her language is simple, idiomatic, authoritative. Her usage ranges as the thought requires from the broad or loose to the strict meaning. She holds to her natural style, avoiding the professional dialects, with their "learned terms." Yet her communications, even those dealing with the fields of specialized knowledge -- science, medicine, nutrition, literature, theology, etc., embodied though they are in simple words, are examples of precision in meaning and intent. It is of God's design that in all inspired writings, he who will may find a place for doubt. But he who would learn God's purpose for him finds guidance and peace of heart. "If you would obey their teachings, you would be assured of their divine origin" (5T 234).

"I state truth. The souls who love God, who believe in Christ, and who eagerly grasp every ray of light, will see light, and rejoice in the truth. They will communicate the light. They will grow in holiness."... "The word of God speaketh truth, not a lie. In it is nothing strained, nothing extreme, nothing overdone" (TM 90).

## **6 "Confusing theories;" "cunning sophistries"**

Being at war (Rev. 12:17), we must expect hostilities: battles and stratagems; assaults and treachery. The early church, Satan first sought to destroy by persecution. That failing, he took up new ground, changed tactics. Posing as a friend, he succeeded in bringing unconverted multitudes into the church, who corrupted its doctrines and polity, till at length the man of sin sat in the temple of God. What he had failed to do by force from without, he accomplished by sophistry from within.

Since it is "Satan's plan to weaken the faith of God's people in the Testimonies" (4T 211), and since "past history will be repeated" and "peril will beset God's people on every side" (TM 116), we may see a parallel between the early church and the remnant. Satan once sought to take Ellen White's life by accident and illness and to destroy her testimony by ridicule and calumny from without. But now, after a century, that is changed. Her noble life and writings have practically silenced such opposition and won praise from the world. Satan therefore, as in the past, has taken up new ground, changed tactics. His "wiles" are now his chief weapons. And the chief attacks are by means of "definitions," "interpretations," "explanations" that explain away; neglect; questioning and the raising of doubts; subtle sophistries -- unsound and confusing ideas--advocated within the church to try to gently rationalize the testimonies to harmonize with our wishes, to facilitate or escape compliance.

As Satan brings some into the church (TM 46), so he seeks to keep in the church those with only a weakened faith in the Testimonies. Being reformers (3T 159), at war, we need to be "spiritually sharp and clear-sighted" (6T 150). No reformer can succeed if his mind is beclouded and uncertain of the truthfulness of his message. To the remnant were committed the oracles of the Spirit of Prophecy, as eyes to guide, revealing the plans, agencies, and wiles of Satan. What a triumph of cunning, then, if he should lead us to weaken the faith of one another!

The most dangerous oppositions are of the mind. We could hardly get more serious blows than those which unsettle the mind and impair spiritual eyesight. "Many today have veils upon their faces. These veils are sympathy with the customs and practices of the world, which hide from them the glory of the Lord" (6T 146). They cannot see the glory, the veils completely obscuring it. Published in 1900 about educational reform, these words express, no doubt, a principle of general application.

Among the serious oppositions are erroneous theories advocated by those who claim to be orthodox, with the only correct ideas, which tends to confuse and imperil souls. History tells how God sent messages of correction and gives the record of those who "put false constructions upon the Testimonies"; would "lessen the confidence of God's people in the testimonies"; "quieted the convictions of the people" (4T 514; 5T 66; TM 235). Since history will be repeated, let us study it to become alert to present and future dangers. Against the testimonies Satan will war with greater cunning and guile. "Perilous times are before us. Everyone who has a knowledge of the truth should awake and place himself, body, soul, and spirit, under the discipline of God. The enemy is on our track. We must be wide awake, on our guard against him. We must put on the whole armor of God. We must follow the directions given through the Spirit of Prophecy. We must love and obey the truth for this time. This will save us from accepting strong delusions. God has spoken to us through His word. He has spoken to us through the testimonies to the church and through the books that have helped to make plain our present duty and the position that we should now occupy. The warnings that have been given, line upon line, precept upon precept, should be heeded. If we disregard them, what excuse can we offer?" (8T 298).

"The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the Testimony of the Spirit of God. ...Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony." "There will be a hatred kindled against the testimonies which is satanic. The workings of Satan will be to unsettle the faith of the churches in them" (1 SM 48).

No member, doubtless, would start out with such an attitude. It will come gradually. Insensibly, the "unsound arguments" and "sophistries" take effect. Those we now hear among us are of a nature to produce neglect, to lessen confidence, and, ultimately, to transform attitude. Considering some of them, as we now do in the following pages, can reveal how sophistry is used as a weapon of attack:

**1. "Novel and storybook reading are the greatest evils in which youth can indulge" (3T 152).**

Since Ellen White's death the foregoing statement has been attacked as a gross exaggeration, which embarrasses our claim of inspiration for these writings. The assertion "does violence to one's intelligence," one declares, "and cannot be believed." It must be explained away. And to clinch that argument, he exclaims, "I don't believe novel reading is worse than murder!"

There is no sin which is not inculcated in some story or novel. Every sin of the heart is not only inculcated but also excused, glamorized, and made

enticing. Myriads of evil ideas are thereby implanted in the mind -- ideas that otherwise might never have been thought of. Fiction is indeed a vast university of evil, an enormous laboratory ever preparing new poisonous mixtures, a mighty fountain whose drugged streams flow as rivers ceaselessly. And in the so-called highclass fiction, the embellishments of language are used to disguise and divert attention from reprehensible teachings. For more than a century the sway of the novel and the short story has been the world's great literary phenomenon. The reason for these inspired words is plain to see. The statement is justified, as all God's utterances are. "His counsel is always reliable" (TM 90).

## **2. "The Bible contradicts the testimonies; for there is fiction in the Bible."**

Let us examine a parallel argument: "The Bible contradicts itself; for John says, 'God so loved the world; then later, 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'" This statement seems childish and beneath notice. But the fallacy needs study, for it has more deceptive forms. The fault lies in THE REPETITION OF A WORD IN TWO ENTIRELY DIFFERENT MEANINGS. It is an absolute must to the logic of this sentence that the key word "world" have the same meaning in both clauses. But instead of that, it here shifts in meaning from one clause to the next. The word is repeated, but the meaning is not! In the first clause, "world" means "mankind"; but in the second, it means something altogether different: "the concerns of this life as opposed to those of the future life." Without warning, the argument artfully shifts mid-sentence to a different meaning -- really changes the subject -- so that the conclusion cannot follow. The incautious or unthinking reader is mystified or misled.

The same logic is used in the argument above. The word "fiction" has more than one meaning. One is defined as "that which is imagined," as "Our dream house, so fondly planned, is still only an architectural fiction." This meaning is not so commonly used. Ellen White, it seems, used it rarely, as in 2T 276. But invariably in this connection she used the common meaning, which is defined as "fictitious literature; specifically, novels." Since it can be truthfully said, however, that in most unliteral language the figures are "imagined," an argument is set up to this effect: "There is fiction (unliteral language) in the Bible; therefore the Spirit of Prophecy does not mean to condemn fiction (fictitious literature)!" Here is the same fallacy: the repetition of a word in two altogether different meanings. This change of key word meaning in mid-sentence makes the argument not only invalid but specious, reprehensive. There is no fictitious literature in the Bible.

## **3. "All imaginary dialog or action in poetry, parable, or the like, is fiction and thus condemned by the Spirit of Prophecy."**

In debating there is a well-known device of overstating the position of an opponent to try to gain a verdict against him by making his argument appear ridiculous. In secular literature, as we have already noticed, we are dealing with materials where the good and the bad are intermingled, not with the perfect. Should one assert that imaginary dialog or action in poetry, as in "The Vaudois Teacher," "Samson Agonistes," "Saul," "The Revenge of Hamish," and the like, depreciates the denunciations of fictitious literature which we are considering,

could he escape the scorn of scholars and the verdict of being either ignorant or unprincipled? Who would think of using such argument before a college or university faculty? No; efforts to embarrass the positions taken by the Spirit of Prophecy by exaggerating its assertions or confusing its meanings, do not refute them.

**4. "In compiling Sabbath Readings for the Home Circle, Mrs. White included fiction, thus contradicting her teachings."**

This 4-volume set of books, published 1877-81, comprised articles, poems, and stories selected from Ellen White's scrapbooks. The Readings were long a part of our regular denominational literature, notices of them appearing in the Signs of the Times and the Review and Herald, with the information that they were compiled by Sr. White. Many of the stories were published in the Signs. In an article in the Review of December 11, 1879, entitled "The Holidays," she wrote: "There are many who have not the books and publications upon present truth. Here is a large field where money can be safely invested. There are a large number of little ones who should be supplied with reading. The Sunshine Series, Golden Grain Series, Poems, Sabbath Readings, etc., are all precious books, and may be introduced safely into every family." As a youth, I read these stories, and I examined them in later years.

Sabbath Readings is, reportedly, the only work prepared by Ellen White that was issued anonymously. Official communications requiring a signature, this unsigned production was prepared in her unofficial, or private, capacity. It would be unthinkable to claim freedom from error for it. On the contrary, human works are bound to embody defect, or error, or shortcoming. It could not be otherwise, only words of heavenly inspiration being free of essential error. Moreover, if, in a piece of skillfully written narration, professional experts, as editors and writers, find it impossible from objective examination to distinguish unerringly between fact and fiction, how much more Mrs. E. G. White? Certainly, she could have read and clipped some fictitious stories. This is to be granted to begin with.

Of special interest in this connection are her reading and her scrapbooks. She was a devoted reader, four areas being noted: (a) burdened as her soul was with the divine mission and message, the Bible and the revelations overpowered all else in her reading and study: "Searching what . . . the Spirit . . . did signify" (1 Pet. 1:11); (b) she watched religious trends from the journals of the conservative churches; (c) alert and interested in what was passing in the world, she read newspapers and magazines, briefly but on a wide range; (d) in a class by itself stands her personal project of culling stories and other materials for reading for children and youth.

Early Writings, her first book, published in 1851, carried a message about unsuitable reading. Sensing a responsibility as members for this light given the church, Elder and Mrs. White began to act, to guard against danger by filling a need. The next year, Elder James White established The Youth's Instructor. Later Mrs. White began to gather in scrapbooks reading materials for the young. There were then perhaps not three thousand Adventists in the world, with no trained story writers among them. Like most of the loads. It was, we may believe, providential that the free exchange of periodicals by editors in

some different fields, as was then customary, provided her access at the office of the Review, without cost, to, presumably, the best serials of the day, which facilitated her search for good reading matter, though not all the sources she searched are known.

In going through exchange periodicals and others, she was reading materials where good and bad were intermingled, materials to be culled, some with one objectionable point (as consciousness in death or approval of theaters), some another, many more being rejected than chosen. Her work resembled that of professionals, as of a teacher of literature, who is bound to read objectionable pieces as he examines productions in order to decide what to avoid and why and what to assign as suitable for students' study; or of a preacher, who must read false doctrine to be able to pin-point prophetic fulfillment and apostate powers.

A distinction: The reading and culling of stories was in discharge of a duty imposed by light sent to the church. ...Elder and Mrs. White were poor, and were carrying heavy burdens, Mrs. White sought to make personally an appropriate response. In other words, she was seeking to guard and benefit church members, not to get personal entertainment. It would therefore be misleading to point to her culling of stories as her reading practice in the sense of its being story reading for pleasure. It was a task which occupied her. To teach that because fictitious stories were possibly among those culled, it was therefore her "practice" to indulge in reading fiction -- would not that be to dishonor her by grave misrepresentation?

During a period of twenty years, as duties allowed, she kept adding from time to time to her scrapbook collection. Five scrapbooks are still in existence, but all are incomplete, selections having been removed, presumably to go into anthologies or to the Signs. The "No. 9" appearing in one book implies that eight had preceded it, but four are missing, their contents seemingly having been used, as in the Readings. Selections from her scrapbooks, as stated above, appeared years ago in the Signs and in anthologies, such as "Sunshine Series, Golden Grain Series, Poems, Sabbath Readings." The residue forms part of her literary remains, owned by the Ellen G. White Estate, Inc. The scrapbooks were never published as such, and the remnants of them are kept in the vault of the White Estate in Washington, D. C. Like her unpublished letters and manuscripts, they are not available for examination except by special request to the custodians.

In our day, some have questioned if all the stories in Sabbath Readings are true. With that in mind, a researcher has made an extended examination of the remains of her scrapbooks, for the purpose of trying to determine if she did clip fictitious stories, using the following as a guide in his study: her selecting of stories will be found to be consistent with "the **true meaning** of the advice she published in the Testimonies and elsewhere concerning fiction-reading." (Emphasis his.) He went to Washington and received permission to study the clippings at first hand. Not all the clippings carry the name of the publication involved. With a list of such publications, the investigator visited large city libraries to examine files of old issues and make critical study of contents and editorial policy. Some of the journals on exchange were secular, some religious, some announced that fiction was included in their offerings. Editors reprinted

stories from exchanges, and not always was it possible to trace such indirect sources further. Many stories were anonymous, some bore the signature of the author, or contributor. The biographies of these contributors were searched for data: what of the author's background? Was he of record as a writer of fiction? The history of American magazines of the nineteenth century was studied, with the marked increase in the number of magazines, the secularization of different magazines that had been religious in their inception, the increasing tendency to publish fiction in their columns. The body of information assembled from all these investigations was in turn tabulated and weighed, and the conclusions drawn.

The investigator believes that there are "many" fictitious stories in the scrapbooks. And he thinks it "highly probable" that there is no significant difference between the stories remaining in her scrapbooks and those she selected for publication in Sabbath Readings. The steps in reasoning leading to his conclusion seem to be as follows:

It is very, very probable that she read fictitious stories in culling; for some exchange periodicals included fiction in their offerings, and it would be very improbable that she would verify the truthfulness before reading, many publications and authors being involved and verification being thus very time-consuming.

It is therefore probable that she put some fictitious stories in her scrapbooks --and later, very probably, in Sabbath Readings.

And it is therefore probable that she used some other test than true-or-false as a basis for choosing.

It seems proper to speak of her culling and selecting stories as part of "her reading practices."

Probably her "reading practices" were in harmony with "the true meaning of the advice she published."

But the Testimonies invariably disapprove of fiction.

Therefore in her official writings, she used such words as fictitious, fiction, novel, with a private meaning, one that allows the reading of such fictitious stories as she selected.

Her convictions doubtless assured her that in using these special definitions, she was consistent with the light given her, as in the Testimonies. And readers will think her inconsistent only if they have prejudged her meaning and refuse to face these facts and adjust their understanding of her utterances accordingly.

To look now at the other side: The above argument rests on and is built up of probability. Could it possibly be otherwise, with compulsive evidence lacking and the actors having passed away, after a century?

But other probabilities and stronger evidence come to mind. Is it probable that Mrs. White, then an experienced woman thirty years of age, entered upon her search without thought of the problems to be met, as the growing use of fiction, the need of counsel and a rule for testing stories?

Is it probable that she did not enlist her husband's help? As parents, with the ...minds of their boys as reminders, did they not pray for guidance and success?

Is it probable that the thirty visions she had up to that time received, and her resulting ministry, did not intensify spiritual sensitivity and strengthen her judgment?

Would neither the Spirit nor holy angel have warned if she were making mistakes which would confuse the counsels already given and thus influence the church to the end of time?

"We have endeavored to avoid these errors," shows that the publishers helped to distinguish between factual and nonfactual narratives. "Sister Ings is devoting every evening to my scrapbooks" (Letter to W. C. White, written October 26, 1876) suggests other help of some kind.

If she culled 1,000 stories in order to find 1 acceptable, as indicated in the preface to volume 4, it would mean a probability of fiction in the 1,000 ten times as great as in the 1. Furthermore, those gathered in the scrapbooks were apparently culled again for publication, which would mean still less probability in the Readings and in the Signs. It seems altogether likely that those which were investigated, the residue, were rejects, set aside as choices were being made. Improbable frequency of coincidence is a treacherous supposition to trust in, as Esther and other Biblical stories show.

The investigator's conclusion that fictitious stories were probably included in the Sabbath Readings, supposes that Sr. White was thus, consciously or unconsciously, violating the instructions divinely given to the church. All through the years, did no leader -- editor, writer, teacher, physician, minister, especially her husband -- notice such violation? The Spirit of Prophecy continuing meanwhile to speak against harmful literature and to call for high standards in reading, did it never occur to any dedicated Adventist to ask, "Are these stories true? Is our practice here in harmony with our teachings?" Are such suppositions reasonable?

Keen, watchful enemies, who used slander, even falsehood, to discredit Adventists, how quick they would have been to flaunt contradiction if they could have truly identified fiction in the Readings, gloating over the exposure and trumpeting it to the world. Does their war against us, however, record any such attacks? Unable to deny a fact, if fact it were, what honest reply could Adventists have made?

Not so; three quarters of a century of silence, instead. Not, reportedly, until after the compiler and the publishers had died was the claim of fiction advanced -- advanced not by nonmembers who were opposing the church, but by members, by professionals. Is not this timing significant? this silence? If she included fiction in Sabbath Readings, she did contradict the inspired instructions, as charged, her act being contrary to them.

The report of the investigation is incomplete, only part of the conclusion being stated. The major, the revolutionary, part is only implied, in the phrase "her **true meaning**," but underscored to show its key place in the thesis. Yet

this part of the conclusion, though pivotal, is unsupported in the argument, is not even mentioned. Why was no evidence advanced?

The full conclusion seems to run thus: In her capacity as a private church member, Ellen White read and clipped fictitious stories, which are condemned in her official writings. Therefore such words as fictitious, fiction, novel, used in those writings, have unstated meanings which cannot be found in dictionaries, her true meaning being one that allows the reading of "good" fictitious stories. Or: Her official writings must be made to agree with her acts in her private life.

Is this argument sound? If she ascribed private, unannounced meanings to pivotal terms in putting into words the light shown her about reading, is it not highly probable that she did likewise in some other area; for she testified to receiving heavenly illumination on many? Indeed, is there one vital area of which she did not treat fundamentally? It is admitted that she never mentioned creating these alleged meanings and never stated them. Thus each reader is left to formulate them as seems to him best and to hold that he is "right." This proposition was not put forth until after her death. Since she, being dead, cannot tell what other private meanings she may have created, how is it possible to be sure of her meaning in any of her statements? Variant meanings being thus read into them, how could Ellen White's testimonies still be "what the Spirit saith" to the church? (Rev. 2:29). Did she create private meanings for "beer," "seance," "adultery," "disease," "ballroom," "sanctification," "worldliness"? Did Isaiah create private meanings for common words? or Paul?

We attribute only sincerity and noble motives to the investigator, even as we cherish for ourselves. It is the pursuit and defense of truth that is the work assigned by the Master. This proposition demolishes Ellen G. White's inspiration. It topples the whole structure of the work of the Spirit of Prophecy in the remnant church. Though not intended to be such, this is actually an undeclared attack on the Spirit of Prophecy under the semblance of loyalty and support. If we take the position that Ellen White used words with other than their true standard meaning, how could we possibly defend ourselves from the charge that we resort to "definition juggling" when faced with our departures from the testimonies? "There is one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written" (Letter 329a, 1905). "There is no halfway work in the matter. The Testimonies are of the Spirit of God or of the devil" (4T 230). Jesus asked, "How readest thou?"

What about the evidence that the stories are factual, as in the "Preface" to volume 1 and the "Note to the Reader" in volume 3?

"These volumes will be found to contain the best lessons for the family circle, such as will inculcate the principles of obedience to parents, kindness and affection to brothers and sisters and youthful associates, benevolence to the poor, and the requirements of the gospel. These virtuous principles are illustrated by instances of conformity in them, or departure from them, in such a manner as to lead to their love and practice." Signed: 'COMPILER.'

"Instance" is defined as "an illustrative case or occurrence; an example." (Emphasis added.) What sure, uncomplicated statements! Would she have

spoken thus if she had not known? Or was she practicing mental reservation about word meanings here?

"Note to the Reader": "Our Sunday-schools and youth's libraries are cursed with religious fiction. We have endeavored to avoid these errors, in giving to the public in this humble series, **matter-of-fact** lessons which appeal to the mind and heart relative to the everyday duties of life." This was signed 'PUBLISHERS.' "Matter-of-fact" as used here is defined as "adhering to, or concerned with, fact; not fanciful or imaginative." (Emphasis added.)

When Sabbath Reading was published, Mrs. E. G. White was fifty years old and had long borne testimony to the church about the evil effects of reading novels, stories, and other objectionable literature. The publishers were very close to Elder James White, as veteran writer-editor-counselor. And as publishers, who were abreast of current story literature and contemporary life, in which they were acting an important part, they spoke from a special coign of vantage. The question "Are these stories true?" evidently received very careful consideration from the compiler as well as from the publishers and their counselors. And they assured the reader that the stories were factual, not fictitious, speaking to the point specifically in the words "instances"; "cursed with religious fiction"; "avoid these errors." And they spread their statements on the public record, where they have stood through the years, for both enemies and friends to read. In the investigation, neither this "Preface" nor the "Note to the Reader" was mentioned.

Other evidence was given, which was to be ever conclusive to the church, even as it was conclusive to the generation which received it. Writing officially in the Review of December 11, 1879, as quoted above, Mrs. E. G. White called "Sabbath Readings" "precious books." But if they contain fictitious stories, then the Spirit here inspired her to praise as precious what He had previously inspired her to condemn as harmful. "I change not . . . nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips" (Mal. 3:6; Ps. 89:34). "I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision -- the precious rays of light shining from the throne" (5T 67). To Seventh day Adventists those words are of unquestionable authority, inspired by the Holy Spirit, who moved the holy prophets of old. God answered Ellen G. White's prayers for wisdom to select stories for republication as verily as He answered Joseph's for wisdom to interpret the dreams.

## Give attendance to Reading 3

**5. "Mrs. White in her later years read a novel and called it a good book." Yet, when a visitor entered the room -- so the story was told -- she quickly put the book under her pillow!**

Continued efforts to trace this story to its source, led invariably to one person, known for his liberal views of Ellen White's ministry and writings, and on that account once called to appear before a committee appointed by the General Conference to consider his fitness for denominational work. So far as has been learned, he did not tell this story until after all the alleged actors had died and could not be interviewed; he never told it except in private; he reported it as hearsay, not as a matter of personal knowledge or investigation. Having heard him tell it to dinner guests in his home, I went again for careful verification, when he told it to me alone. The two accounts varied.

Those who advocate reading novels and other fiction, give prominence to this alleged incident to support their position. If one were conscious that his views had a good moral foundation, would he turn to material like this for hoped-for support? Through the years, baseless and slanderous stories were told about Mrs. E. G. White. This story, with its questionable character, belongs, without doubt, in the same class as those other unfounded ones.

**6. "Stories are not to be classed as fiction if the authors in composing them adapted some material drawn from actual experience."**

If this argument is valid, then Uncle Tom's Cabin and a host of other books of historical and realistic fiction must also be exempted and lifted to some unnamed category. For Uncle Tom's Cabin, as we know, made some use of fact, as do many other works of fiction, as the wording of 5T 516 shows: "other books which are nothing but fiction." Works of fiction of modern times are not chiefly or characteristically works of fantasy, like "Jack and the Beanstalk." One great aim of modern novelists is, rather, to achieve verisimilitude, the semblance of actuality. To this end, the novelist is continually drawing upon the experiences of daily life, selecting, shaping, throwing over them the coloring of the imagination to serve his purpose. How many of his countless experiences aboard ship, for example, did Conrad adapt in his novels of the sea. In life men work and play, love and hate, sin and suffer; in fiction they are made to behave similarly. But to argue that because fiction incorporates realistic material -- even actual experiences as transformed -- it is not to be called fiction, is to use an argument that devours us. By it we make the testimony to the church pointless and absurd and ourselves the objects of deserved scorn. Multitudes of such works of fiction were in print when Ellen White wrote, and she identified them among those she was directed to condemn.

**7. "If it is based on fact, a story is not to be considered fiction."**

Such phrases as "based on fact," "based on factual material," "based on true experiences," "having a historical background," "essentially true," "substantially true," have lost all value as instruments of straightforwardness and precision. They have become notorious symbols of cloudiness and

equivocation. They are used to describe many works of fiction. And so used, they are, in most cases, merely elastic expressions, prized because they enable one to hide the fact that while seeming to say one thing, he really means another. They confuse and deceive. They enable one to impress minds with the rich, powerful connotations of "true," "factual," and "historical," yet to conceal the base overtones of "fiction," or "novel." A lay member, for example, hears us say, "This book is based on true experiences." Our words seem to him forthright, authoritative. Believing his words to be true, he later tells someone: "Elder-So-and-So said that this is a true story." Could we successfully deny that this is the impression we felt he would get, perhaps that we intended him to get, from our words? Others use language like that, but should we? "Whatever in our practice is not as open as day, belongs to the methods of the prince of evil." (TM 366).

In the process of drawing up a typical "substantially true" story, the author chooses incidents from his own life, perchance, or others of which he has heard; he imagines a body of romantic experiences; he imagines a group of other experiences. Unwanted parts of the real incidents are suppressed; the parts he wishes to use are remodeled as deemed needful for his purpose; and with the resulting product, he combines and fuses the imaginary elements, attributing all to the life of one person and seeking to impress the stamp of unity upon them. The story is enlivened with imaginary conversation and colorful touches, as of description, humor, wit, moralizing, and the like. Throughout the narrative, it is his purpose to arouse a predetermined central feeling and to exhibit literary skill and power. It seems almost unnecessary to go into this simple detail and show that such a story is not true. It is, instead, a piece of fiction. Publishers, reviewers, librarians, historians of literature, and authors themselves, classify such stories as fiction. If the Spirit of Prophecy had not condemned fictitious literature, would any Seventh-day Adventist ever have thought to deny the proper classification of such stories?

**8. "Presenting it in stories of high-class fiction, enables us to write the truth up interestingly."**

Any Bible truth can, of course, be handled dully, meanly, or stupidly. That melancholy fact is another matter -- bad and self-condemned. But must fiction be added to truth to make it interesting? Is truth less interesting than fiction? "Interesting" in whose view? Bacon said that mixing falsehood with truth debases it but makes it work better. But what child of God would not shrink from the devastating conclusions of both these arguments?

**9. "What is PILGRIM'S PROGRESS? It is fiction, pure and simple."**

This argument involves a principle that is expressed in the axiom, "Knowledge consists in the distinction of differences." We teach the child to distinguish between to, too, and two. And as one climbs the ladder of knowledge, the process continues. What pains are taken in arguing some great matter before a high tribunal or deliberative assembly. With what meticulous care are issues stated and the precise definitions of fundamental words agreed on beforehand. And with the defining of synonyms, how is it? To define synonyms is to state the fine distinctions that exist between words that are largely but not entirely identical in meaning or use, as between work and labor

and toil; between handsome and beautiful and beauteous; between poetry and poesy. Defining synonyms, in deed, may be taken as a symbol of the whole learning process. The careful defining of critical terms is a prominent and essential part of scholarly productions. It is inseparable from the effort to state truth clearly, so as to enlighten, convince, and persuade.

Discourse, we are aware, is divided into four classes: description, narration, exposition, and argument. History and biography are examples of narrative discourse, as are memoirs, records of travel and exploration and adventure, stories, parables, allegories, and so on; fictitious literature, as romances, novels, myths, epics, and others. While all these are in common members of the family of narration, yet each one is distinct from all the others and has its own skillfully worded definition. They may not of right be used interchangeably. They are not synonyms. Each word was originated to name a separate thing. Students are expected to learn definitions and to use words discriminatingly.

Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory, as all know. It is not fictitious literature, as this argument would assert. Allegory is ancient, having been used for thousands of years as such. For two and a half centuries, *Pilgrim's Progress* has been, no doubt, the world's best known, best loved allegory. In GC 252, Ellen White calls it a "wonderful allegory." Allegory is a figure of speech; thought expressed in unliteral language. As Christians, it is ours to teach the recognition of distinctions in meaning.

Sometimes certain words are used in a loose meaning. In order to avoid unpleasant repetition, perhaps, or to contribute to a tone of informality, a writer may introduce a loose-meaning use, as "the story of the prodigal son." in a chapter that elsewhere speaks of the "parable of the prodigal son." Such use is at times employed by most careful writers. It is a conscious and purposeful variation from their customary strict-meaning use. The context safeguards the reader from error. In this instance just noted, the loose meaning of "story" is "narrative." Such established variation in use stands out in strong contrast, however, as a thing altogether opposed, to unwarrantable classifications that serve to confuse and mislead.

The confusing of terms, the jumbling of meanings, the blurring of distinctions --these we expect in misleading advertising, in demagoguery, sophistry, charlatanry, in false religious teachings. But the children of light have a different standard. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). Sent forth to teach a message from Heaven, how careful we should be to handle truth honestly in the sight of all men; to be models in using only sound arguments and sound speech.

"That isn't the way I interpret it. I don't think it means that. We can differ in our interpretations."

Webster says that "interpret" as used here means, "to construe in the light of individual belief, judgment, or interest." The two assumptions on which the above argument rests are these: (a) that the language of the Spirit of Prophecy may need elucidation; and (b) that the reader has a right to construe it according to his judgment.

First, is Ellen White's language ever obscure or unintelligible and in need of elucidation? Unlike the Bible, her writings belong to the contemporary world, with its characteristic ideas and ways of life and thought. But the Bible deals with history the most remote, with long-forgotten religions, manners, customs, and modes of thought and expression, so that a commentary by devout scholars can throw valuable light on some Biblical expressions. But who would advocate the need for a commentary on Sr. White's writings?

Of all Heaven's messages to men, none, doubtless, are more simple and clear than those to the remnant. The Bible, we are told, is "sufficient to enlighten the most beclouded mind." But because some who profess to study it, live "in direct opposition to its plainest teachings," God has sent "plain and pointed"; "simple direct testimonies," and "through the Testimonies has simplified the great truths" of the Bible. "Your success is in your simplicity. As soon as you depart from this and fashion your testimony to meet the minds of any, your power is gone." It comes "down to the minutiae of life" (5T 663, 665, 667).

The single pronouncement on life insurance has been much discussed. Perhaps humble compliance would have resulted in greater spiritual strength. "Cheese," mentioned practically without details, occasioned inquiry from Sr. White as to the distinctions between wholesome and unwholesome kinds. These instances stand out because in the thousands of pages from Ellen G. White's pen there is hardly one word that needs elucidation. The simplicity and clarity of her writings have caused scholars to marvel. Is it elucidation that we need, or is it to read and obey them with willing minds?

Next, has the reader a right to construe according to his "individual belief, judgment, or interest"? God provided against that principle by making the Bible its own interpreter. "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in the old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:20, 21). That law includes the writings of Ellen White. The Spirit, who gave all the inspired writings, is ever present to interpret -- to put the right construction upon -- them as passage is reverently compared with passage. A warning was put on record concerning church members who once "put false constructions upon the Testimonies" (4T 514).

Nature speaks of God. But it could not reveal the plan of salvation. Sinners needed another revelation, which was written out in human language. As the Bible, God has miraculously preserved it from destruction and essential error. It is holy because God claims it as His -- His word, possessing His living power. That body of language is sacred -- "the holy scriptures." None may with impunity tamper with its assertions, word meanings, or grammatical laws. Those assertions, meanings, and laws, translators, and expositors are obligated to observe as perfectly as possible.

Not private, but public, are established word meanings and language laws, a racial development and possession. Not private judgment, but public usage, determines what are the established meanings of words. No one may properly set them aside in favor of private belief. With respect to all the inspired writings, we are as truly obligated to observe linguistic laws and meanings as

we are to observe the ten commandments. Willful disregard is sin. It is impossible to overemphasize this fact. God means what He says. (5T 171). To raise doubts, to reject established meanings and substitute one's own opinion or "understanding" in the language of the Spirit of Prophecy, is to follow the principles of the "higher critics" of the past, whose "learned terms" gave impetus to the spread of infidelity.

To Eve, Satan insinuated against God's truthfulness and created doubt, till "She thought that perhaps the Lord did not mean just what He said" (EW 147; COL 108). God has warned that Satan is working similarly now to undermine faith and obedience. Were this warning not needed, it would not have been given.

And Satan is thus working intensively now -- working to establish sophistries concerning the Spirit of Prophecy statements that cut across our desires or cherished indulgences. From Fall Councils have come appeals to uphold standards. We have departed somewhat from them, as in Sabbath observance, health reform, physical labor in education, business management, publishing, dress, reading, amusements, sports, drug medication, social relations, and others.

Satan's strategy is to infiltrate our thinking. He is counting on the gradual. Subtly, imperceptibly, with glacier like movement, he is instilling non-Adventist concepts. If unchecked, these will transform us into caricatures of the pioneers, whose mighty affirmations and faith moved mountains of difficulty and made a way for the third angel's message. Though the eye cannot detect the motion, the hands of the clock do move. Though imperceptible, it is actual. Our peril from the sophistries used to rationalize the inspired counsels and explain away our departures, is great, though we may be insensible to it.

A comfortable faith in the testimonies may be merely an indolent or a deceptive one, full of danger. Like the Bible, the testimonies clash with the will of the flesh, and to follow them we must crucify self. The gradual will become inevitable except for divine aid. The last crisis is pictured with two centers of conflict: an inner, over the Spirit of Prophecy; and an outer, over the Sabbath (EW 270; 9T 16).

The former, silently working, long continued, culminates in an open break that separates the members of the church as between genuine and spurious. The inner evil, spreading unseen, unfelt, insidious, is a plague more to be feared, it may be, than the violent, spectacular battle with the powers of earth over the Sabbath; for it seems almost impossible to sense its dimensions in our own lives and its fateful potentialities. Satan would seal our overthrow beforehand and have us do it ourselves in the quiet of thought.

### **11. Smothered expressions used to mislead, to misrepresent.**

"Smother" in this sense means "to cover up so as to conceal." A smothered expression, then, has two parts: (1) something hidden; and (2) the cover which conceals it; in other words, a smotherED and a smotherING expression. Some of them spring from a good desire, as not to cause sadness or fright: "a smothered sigh," "a smothered cry of pain." Others result from bad motives: to try to avoid condemnation for an intended act, as a smothered oath -- "darn" to smother "damn"; "gosh," a minced oath for "God." This latter kind of smothered

expression has to do with a thing that is bad, and the words evoke evil connotations. The smothering expression, therefore, is made up of fresh words chosen for their acceptable connotations. It is a new name, designed to improve the reputation of a bad thing.

Why are such expressions used? Unaware of their character and purpose, some use them without wrong intent. But used designedly, their purpose is to attract attention away from a bad thing and silence its evil connotations by suppressing its name and identity, so as to induce the reader also to believe that a bad thing is not bad. Such a smothering expression is essentially misleading; it is a subterfuge. Its planned use serves the purposes of deception: to attach a misleading label; to conceal the fact that one is thus teaching the acceptance of a thing known to be condemned.

An example from the literary field will illustrate the growing use of this device concerning things condemned by the Spirit of Prophecy. "Fiction," "novels," "fictitious literature" are smothered under "imaginative literature" and "creative writing."

These latter phrases are from the fields of promotion, advertising, propaganda. Wishing to avoid the bad connotations of the terms "fiction," "novels," "fictitious," one turns to fresh phrases, prized because they are undefined and hazy and so help him avoid censure, and because "imaginative" and "creative" connote something superior, highly endowed. The occasional use of these phrases as loose designations -- vague and inexact -- has facilitated their acceptance as smothering expressions and diverted attention from what is involved in this latter use.

"True imagination is far from being merely a playful outcome of mental activity, a thing of joy and beauty only." It "performs the initial and essential functions in every branch of human development."

Imaginative power is possessed in different degrees by different persons; it is exercised in different degrees at different times and tasks. It has lower forms and higher. In the lower we see it as in displays, arrangements, exhibits, lay-outs, pageants, spectacles, scenic effects; in styling and costuming; in model-making; in decorating; in engineering; in invention; in research -- in unnumbered examples of commercial, industrial, and structural planning and design. But the higher forms, to which our attention is presently drawn, are found, typically, in the fine arts, as literature, music, painting, sculpture. See also MH 88.

The word literature has been stretched out in use, till colloquially it is applied to almost any kind of printed matter. But now we shall pass by derived meanings. Used in its highest sense, it means writings in which artistic form and "ideas of permanent and universal interest are essential features." It is therefore impossible to produce true literature without the use of the imagination; for it is the imagination which must serve to produce the "artistic form" that is an essential element. Properly speaking, all real literature, then, is by definition imaginative literature, so that the phrase "imaginative literature" is tautological as "wet water," "round circle," "dead corpse." It has to be wet to be water; round to be a circle; dead to be a corpse. And it has to be imaginative and creative to be literature.

The tautology is the secret of their vague meaning and the ease with which they can be made to minister to ambiguity. They are never employed as exact terms. They are not found in the works of scholars where clarity, precision, and enlightenment are the goals sought for.

"Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the sunlight. Truth is of God; deception, in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan; and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one" (MB 105-6).

**12. A writer's character has no necessary relation to his writings. All having sinned, every author is a sinner. Good books being thus of necessity the work of sinners, character has no necessary bearing on one's writings. Byron's sins were heinous; but what of David and Solomon? We read them; so it is proper to read Byron. Furthermore, Paul quoted Aratus, the pagan Greek poet (Acts 17: 28); therefore he read Aratus; and so may we. Ellen White denounced Gibbon yet recommended "Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation," where Smith quotes Gibbon repeatedly, whom he must have read. The pronouncements against classes of writers or individuals, as Gibbon or Byron or Paine or others, should not deter us from reading their works. Those pronouncements would require us to abandon a large part of secular literature. But we may, on the contrary, read any author except for sheer infidelity or godlessness. And one can be benefitted by what he considers great literary productions, "despite the failings of the authors, and without in any way being tainted with the sins and weaknesses of those authors."**

The aim in the above argument is to set aside the disapproval by the Spirit of Prophecy of named authors and classes of authors. Such statements of disapproval have been attacked repeatedly in attempts to minimize or destroy the restrictions they set up.

Is this "sound" argument? Let us consider the points raised:  
Classes of writings and writers. The Spirit of Prophecy does condemn classes of writings and writers and members of such classes:  
Dissolute men (as Byron and others) CT 26  
Infidel authors (as Paine, Ingersol, Mencken) CT 136, 401  
Men at war with God's government MH 440  
Men who defy the principles of God's law MH 443  
Unsanctified authors and classes of writings, as:  
Greek & Latin Literature, "corrupt, corrupting" MH 444  
Greek tragedies MH 444  
Works of Satan's agents FE 168

**b. "Abandon a large part."** But isn't this what we are admonished to do? Doesn't this argument look upon the virtue as a defect? As we study the blueprint, is it not clear that the secular literature God's people should read is to be not only very carefully sifted but also very greatly reduced in quantity? A little of the more-or-less "golden and vital" to be selected from "huge rubbish mounds"?

Have we been too slow of heart to believe all that His messenger has written? Fearful or reluctant to "cut loose" from "worldly conformity"?

**c. Professional responsibility ignored.** The Spirit of Prophecy recognizes (chapter one) that professional duties require one to read what others not bearing such responsibilities should avoid. The minister needs added knowledge of Mormonism, for example, in order to come close to Mormons and meet them where they are. Gaining such knowledge is not a professional privilege, but a responsibility. And a safeguard was given. Let not license be taken from this. It admonishes the professional not to drop guard or explore needlessly; the nonprofessional not to enter an area of known danger where duties do not lead.

Uriah Smith summoned historians who testify that Bible prophecies were fulfilled with marvelous accuracy; and he showed that even Gibbon, despite his skepticism, bore unwilling witness to that fact. It would have been unreasonable for Smith to omit from his study the testimony of one of the greatest of the historians of Rome.

**d. Paul and Aratus.** Without evidence or probability, it is assumed that Paul after his conversion read Aratus.

**e. David and Solomon.** For the inspired volume, they "wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"; not while living in known sin and disobedience, but after thorough heart repentance. Is it proper, is it honest, to class them with Byron, whom a distinguished scholar calls a literary "pariah"?

**f. All authors sinners.** True, we are born sinners by nature. In that all men are alike. But after that? Some are born but once. Others are "born again." Those live after the flesh. These strive to live for truth and righteousness -- the Enochs, the Jobs, the Daniels, the multitude of the honest in heart, accounted righteous before God. How could we ignore this moral demarcation that serves to separate human beings and to put each soul into one of these two great classes?

**g. "False reasoning."** Does not this argument partake of the "unsound," "confusing theories," "cunning sophistries," which we have been told will be used against the testimonies? It mingles truthful and specious ideas, as about David and Paul and all men's being sinners. Over-emphasis serves to mislead, as in pages of recital of the weaknesses and sins of men of letters. It uses ridicule and misrepresentation, as: "Some good conscientious folk believe we should not have anything to do with any of the writings of any man who is in **any way defective.**" (Emphasis supplied.) Opposers are presented as weak-minded or illiterate. The arguer recommends the reading of novels, and declares that the teaching of literature in our schools through the years has conformed to the counsels given. And this despite the warning in 1913, only two years before Ellen White's death: "There is need of separating from our educational work an erroneous, polluted literature" (CT 389).

Does such a conclusion recommend this argument? Could sound argument lead to such a conclusion? Is there not, rather, danger that all this serves to confuse the meaning of the testimonies; to undermine faith in them; to break down a barrier which God has erected to guard His people?

In the writings of all authors, even pagans, skeptics, infidels, atheists, truth is to be found, even "many precious gems of thought," although not used

for a good purpose. Therefore since both the bad and the good express truth, this cannot possibly serve to distinguish between them. To that extent, they are alike, not different. Nor can we find a mortal whose life or composition is perfect. Here, too, all are alike, not different -- all have some imperfection. That, consequently, cannot possibly distinguish one from another.

All being alike in expressing some truth and in showing defects, we look for the element in which they are unlike -- the mark of separation -- in the overall influence and purpose of a human life. For though a good man's production is not perfect, his purpose may be. He may yield to divine influence and seek wholeheartedly to express only that which is good, beautiful, true. So looked upon, men fall into two classes -- classes which are worlds apart. A good man, we well know, may fall and rise again, as all of them have done. Also a corrupt person may write, say, a poem in which we see no fault. Yet the poet and the class of writers to which he belongs, may be unmistakably condemned. Then may come temptation to doubt or disregard. But at that moment let us remember that God had all these things in view when He inspired the instructions and warnings we have. Such variations in experience are a part of human life. Explicitly have we been told that precious gems of thought may be found in forbidden fields, although inspired to make attractive the sentiments and agencies of the evil one. But why go there for mere intellectual truth, God asks, when all truth is at our command? Why turn from the pure waters of Lebanon to the defiled streams of the valley? Why thus endanger ourselves and others by our example? Let us, rather, resolve to learn what God has said and to comply willingly. In choosing among authors, let us ask: What has God said about this class of writers? As a whole, were this person's life-work and purpose on the side of the good and the true?

**13. "We've used fiction for years in our missionary literature -- stories in our papers, tracts, and booklets. It must be all right. Our people like it; it gets more popular all the time; and it brings people into the truth."**

If our use of fiction has led people into the message, and if that fact justifies our using fictitious literature in proclaiming present truth, then the conversion of his heathen wife justified Solomon's "sin," his "terrible mistake" in marrying her (PK 53). It also justifies any Christian's marrying an unbeliever, on the claim that doing so may result in his conversion.

Solomon reasoned that his disobedience would spread the knowledge of Jehovah (FE 498-503). Contrary to God's command he married Pharaoh's daughter, who was converted and became a worshiper of the true God. But that marriage was a chief step in Solomon's fearful apostasy and in setting the feet of Israel in the path to national ruin. "There is a lesson for us in the history of Solomon" (7T 217).

Some spectators were converted from observing the bearing of martyrs in the flames. But how could we argue that it is justifiable to burn Christians at the stake in order to increase conversions to the faith? Those conversions did not lessen the guilt of the persecutors.

**14. Adventist teachers and other professionals should, in dealing with secular literature, hold to a positive approach.**

Satan poisons words! He would make **negative** imply only what is narrow, prejudiced; while he would make **positive** imply the modern, the enlightened. And that to keep us from reading God's warnings! (Eze. 3:18). But "we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). "That law of ten precepts of the greatest love that can be presented to man is the voice of God from heaven speaking to the soul in **promise**. 'This do, and you will not come under the dominion and control of Satan.' There is not a negative in that law, although it may appear thus. It is DO, and LIVE. . . . The Lord has given His holy commandments to be a wall of protection around His creatures" (SD 53). And so with all His guarding limitations. It was so in Eden. To expose pitfalls and hold to His directions in reading, is to work constructively, positively, as did Paul (Acts 20:31) and as did Ellen White in the chapters "The Snares of Satan," "The Aims of the Papacy," "Modern Revivals," in **The Great Controversy** and similarly in many other works. To love right, means to hate wrong. "**Abhor** that which is evil."

**15. Reading is a personal matter; don't meddle in others' affairs.**

One's choice of food, drink, and clothing, is also a matter of personal responsibility. From Moses, however, and onward, how much of Holy Writ would be lost if all directives regarding personal matters were left out! **Meddling**, too, caricatures the idea, doesn't it? The spirit is rather that of a loving Father speaking to guard His children from peril. "The Lord would have all His sons and daughters happy, peaceful, and obedient" (AA 564).

**16. Overemphasis on a minor matter. Keep to the great essentials.**

The battle of life is won or lost in the mind. "The thoughts will be of the same character as the food provided for the mind" (5T 544). "According to their pastures, so were they filled" (Hosea 13:6). The Christian "stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil" (Isaiah 33:15), knowing that "out of" his heart "are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). If eternal life hinges on what prevails in the mind, how can it be minor? In almost every book, Ellen White stressed it. And what of Solomon's words?

**17. Mrs. White undoubtedly read widely in secular literature and was much indebted to it.**

So notable was the literature of the nineteenth century that one might easily think to find it entering in a large way into the subject matter of Ellen White's writings. The remarkable thing is, however, that such influence is nil, though she was a prolific writer, with a long career. High seriousness, strength, and literary beauty characterize her prose. All things considered, she was doubtless the greatest woman writer in history, yet she spent only about three years in the schoolroom.

Now Moses, Solomon, Daniel, were men of giant intellect and wonderful attainments, with the highest training. By contrast, Ellen White was of common abilities, obscure, unschooled, and so injured in childhood that her life was despaired of, leaving her frail, incapacitated for writing and even much reading and, it was feared, for future intellectual pursuits. Yet in her teens she was called to minister to the church and to produce voluminous writings, which we test by the Bible, but which are as truly inspired. A chapter would not suffice

fitly to survey the works that attest her literary pre-eminence, their marvelous range, depth, and accuracy. Who has equaled her achievement?

From what source, one wonders, could she have drawn her subject matter? Where did she get such knowledge? Not from institutions of learning. Not from secular literature. Where, then? From divine revelation:

"They (letters, testimonies, articles) are what God has opened before me in vision, -- the precious rays of light shining from the throne" (5T 67). The visions continued through life. In this vast body of communications, she was occupied through a lifetime, and from it came the subject matter of her official communications, writings, sermons, et cetera. It was not from books, then, that she learned of Thomas Paine and how Satan influenced his writings (EW 89). It was not from human sources that she learned theology and the art of healing. Not from reading came her knowledge of Ingersol, Byron, Shakespeare, novels, or the final destiny of Napoleon. From no human source came her counsels on nutrition, natural remedies, the causes of disease, the interrelationships of mind and body, the role of electricity in the human system, the future sway of spiritism; for, manifestly, no human sources possessed such knowledge.

But besides the Bible and revelation, from what other sources did she draw? Like Joseph, she was a person "of affairs, educated by study, observation, and contact with men" (Ed 51). And she had what Joseph did not have, the Bible and the Spirit's inspiration. "Contact with men" suggests her eventful life, a life spent in a storm center of religious controversy, the Advent Movement proclaiming truth to displace hoary errors. She personified, as it were, the impulse of reform. She traveled widely, lived in different states, from Maine to California, and overseas, and was an alert observer, interested in contemporary events and movements. Professionals were among her associates in the Advent Movement, persons of achievement and piety. The stream of visitors; relatives, secretaries, and other assistants; her circle of correspondents -- such varied fellowship provided the intellectual climate of the age, with its patterns of thought and expression. But molding all her messages, were the visions imparted to her throughout her long and fruitful life.

Turning from subject matter, one asks about her **style**. How came her facility and correctness in the mother tongue, in idiom, in diction? "Style is the man," says the ancient dictum, an expression of **experience**. From childhood, Mrs. White had "known the holy scriptures." The Bible her lifelong study, its rhythms and promises molded her thoughts. From the Bible and "contact with men" came her command of language, plus the effort to communicate faithfully the light she received -- thousands and thousands of handwritten pages.

But are there not seen in Mrs. White's works so many poems, so many quotations and borrowings as practically to support the conclusion that she read widely in secular literature? An explanation may throw needed light on this. Most of the poems which appear in some printings of **Steps to Christ, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing**, were, according to a practice then in vogue, inserted by the **publishers** as **fillers** at the end of chapters where the author's text occupied only part of the last page, or to face the opening of chapters, or to occupy a blank page at the end of a book, as in some printings of **Christ's Object Lessons**. However, "where poetry is used and **tied in with**

**the text**, we have every reason to believe that Mrs. White herself made the selection of such bits of verse." (Emphasis supplied). This matter has been dealt with in a booklet entitled *Messenger to the Remnant*, written by Elder A. L. White of the Ellen G. White Publications, whose words are quoted in the preceding sentence and below:

"You ask if it was a practice of Sister White to read books of poetry. Sister White read widely, but more in general publications. As she traveled, she read the journals issued by other conservative religious groups, and in her general reading she was bound to come across some choice poetry here and there. We find in the original handwritten manuscripts she draws from these poems usually giving the name of the author. Sometimes the poetry is actually a part of a familiar hymn which has come from our hymn books. It could be that she read some books of poems. I am not aware of our having on our shelves such works. I think what she picked up along this line came from more general reading often in the religious field." Elder White's booklet, which sweeps away misconceptions, and which we wish were in every Adventist library and home, tells of the special circumstances under which, it seems, Sister White read in **Paradise Lost** or possibly all of it.

Mrs. White used a few familiar truisms or proverbs. Writers use them without quotation marks because their origin is, typically, lost in antiquity. On the lips of millions, through the ages, such expressions, like air and sunlight, are not the property of any person, but a common possession, like the vocabulary of the mother tongue and do not class as borrowings. They are found, characteristically, in almost all races because each expresses pithily some facet of human experience. Folk wisdom, they are called, the ideas in the thousands of aphorisms and maxims. Some are earthy: Hard to make an empty bag stand up; set a thief to catch a thief; it's the still pig that drinks the swill; trying to carry water in a sieve. Others are on high levels: To err is human, to forgive divine; procrastination is the thief of time; necessity is the mother of invention; knowledge is power. If one is alive and in contact with others, he is bound to hear such familiar sayings, ever commonly used in writing and conversation. Being university trained in Latin and Greek, Wordsworth would know that plain living and high thinking had been used by Cicero and others in ancient times. Becoming famous, Wordsworth gave the phrase fresh popularity and many others have repeated it. Similarly with Robert Burns and man's inhumanity to man, a phrase not original with him. Ancient writers had voiced the idea. Wordsworth echoed it, as have many others since.

In *Messages to Young People*, page 449, Ellen White seemingly alludes to the saying that love is blind. Neither Chaucer or Shakespeare originated that expression. Plato used it ages before. In *Paradise Lost* Milton wrote of the world as suspended from the empyrean by a golden chain. But Homer had used the phrase in the *Iliad*, as Milton would know. Numberless writers have used it since, among them Frances E. Willard, Mrs. White's eminent contemporary. Brevity is the soul of wit is not Shakespeare's coinage nor all that glitters is not gold, though he used them. They are ancient.

Aside from such familiar expressions, what actual quotations from secular literature are there in Ellen White's works? These have been found: a fragment of phrasing from *Paradise Lost*, two couplets from Pope, three lines

from Lowell, two stanzas from Longfellow, a few bits from unknown poets -- all being illustrative only. Each could be omitted without any change in the thought she is expressing. And there are 55 published works, of more than 23,000 closely printed pages; and in addition, the manuscript material in her files, which is "roughly estimated at 55,000 pages of typewritten material! Well nigh incredible it is, the literary achievement of Ellen G. White. Even more impressive than the magnitude, the lofty morality, the integrity of her work, is the fact that she labored wholly without benefit of scholastic or formal literary training and without indebtedness to men of letters. It is as if God purposed to "confound the things that are mighty" by empowering "one of the weakest of the weak" to do a supernatural work, as truly miraculous as was the revealing of the king's dream to Daniel. "What is that (book) in thine hand?" Gen. 4:2 A human production in which essential error may be found?

"The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. . . . Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony" (1 SM 48).

What an advantage! Satan's battle plans stand revealed to us -- just how he is to mount his last powerful onslaught! First to note: the attack is to be a "deception," not an open attack, as if one should declare the **Testimonies** to be full of mistakes and Ellen White an impostor. Not at all. But the very opposite. It will be an **undeclared** attack, having the semblance of acceptance and support of the Spirit of Prophecy, while actually designed to nullify it, leaving the form, with the life and authority removed.

His masterly methods: "weaken the faith" -- (not destroy it); "lessen the confidence"; "make of none effect the testimony"; "unsettle the faith of the churches in them"; "put a false construction upon the Testimonies"; "confusing theories"; "cunning sophistries." Startling phrases these, to picture to us the attack: **weaken, unsettle, confuse, delude**, false constructions, working **ingeniously!**

The spirit of the attack is strong, deadly -- "satanic" "hatred." Next to the Bible, what does Satan hate more than Ellen White's writings? "In different ways and through different agencies." Strategic cunning! His supreme purpose is deception, by this means, by that. He wants us to think we are strong, when actually our faith is unsettled, weak!

"There will be a hatred kindled against the testimonies which is satanic. The workings of Satan will be to unsettle the faith of the churches in them, for this reason: Satan cannot have so clear a track to bring in his deceptions and bind up souls in his delusions if the warnings and reproofs and counsels of the Spirit of God are heeded" (1 SM 48). This gave a forecast (in 1890) of what was to arise within the church. Is this hatred already burning? What growing neglect of the Testimonies and variation in the practices of members, as concerning Sabbath observance, amusements, sports, food, drink, dress, reading, marital and social relations, and others! Is there a cause-and-effect relationship here?

Our teachers -- and other leaders -- do not take a similar position concerning the reading and teaching of fiction, for example. Some read and

teach it, some do not. So it always has been. From Early Writings and onward, however, the Spirit of Prophecy has spoken unvaryingly against it year after year. Yet such variations seems to be increasing, excuses and arguments being based on definitions, the presence of mingled materials, and the question of trustworthiness.

In 1913, only two years before her death, Sr. White wrote that our schools were at fault in the literature being used. Of the great non-alignments which had already been pointed out, this is the one named in this last special warning: "There is need of separating from our educational work an erroneous, polluted literature, so that ideas which are the seeds of sins will not be received and cherished as the truth" (CT 389). Does the record show that this admonition was heeded?

One body; many members, all different. Unity in an endless diversity. Our overriding responsibility is to keep the unity of the Spirit on the bonds of brotherly love. Diversity in details; unity on principles. But such unity and love are in harmony with a firm belief that "God means what He says" (1T 518), and a personal determination to do one's best to obey. The "hatred" is a certainty. On the other hand, some will "tremble at his word" (Isa. 66:5) as voiced in the writings of Ellen G. White. Thus a growing separation into two classes: "some do, some don't." As teachers and others set to lead the way, to mold the youth, let us "press together." "The enemy is on our track."

All who determine to "examine" themselves and follow the Master will doubtless be impressed not to criticize - anyone but themselves. By criticism Satan stifles self-examination. The evils we see, he prompts us to ascribe to sources outside ourselves. Especially let us resist impulses to criticize our leaders. God is using them to direct His work. Their devotion is a blessing to which Satan would have us insensible. "When the truth abides in the heart, there is no place for criticism of God's servants, or for picking flaws with the message He sends" (CT 342).

The past, too, is aglow. How God has led His remnant people! He will finish the work. Though some are neglecting them, yet the Testimonies are being circulated today as never before, and devout souls the world around are studying and shaping their lives by them.

Do we ask why more sermons are not preached on Satan's wiles? Is not God testing us to see what we will do with the floods of light we have? What more could He say? We have an unspeakable treasure in the writings of His messenger, which we profess to prize as inspired. Do our actions correspond? We are becoming story conscious. Are new books taking time which belongs to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy? How can God help us by His counsels if they are not put into our minds?

Daily dedication to holy independence (Joshua 24:15) will strengthen us; also a resolve to learn and obey God's will, not to wait for others. "We are not to concern ourselves so much about the course that others are following, as about the course that we ourselves are following" (CT 155). Looking to Jesus and standing personally for principle will increase in importance. "He requires nothing of you that will not make you happier, even in this life" (SD 148).

"The instruction that was given in the early days of the message is to be held as safe instruction to follow in these its closing days. Those who are indifferent to this light and instruction must not expect to escape the snares which we have been plainly told will cause the rejecters of light to stumble, and fall, and be snared, and be taken" (1 SM 41). Assent, clearly, cannot substitute for right action. Even while making the golden calf, Aaron was miraculously supplied with manna. Thus to His people, blessings are not proof that God approves their course. Is it safe to cite the progress of the message today as proof that God overlooks the disregard of His counsels? (Rev. 22:14).

"The highway of the upright" is a superior one, not set with obstacles but provided with safeguards, erected to give speed and freedom, the way to inner peace and the joyous sense of spiritual well-being. God is all wise, every detail of our circumstances being clearly before Him when He inspired the Testimonies. He gave these counsels on reading. True, we may err in judgment or fail to study so as to understand them fully; but when rightly applied they surely are practical. If they could not be followed successfully, they would not have been given.

"The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. . . . Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony" (1 SM 48)

"While right principles and correct habits are of first importance among the qualifications of the teacher, it is indispensable that he should have a thorough knowledge of the sciences. With uprightness of character, high literary acquirements should be combined.

If you are called to be a teacher, you are called to be a learner also. If you take upon yourself the sacred responsibility of teaching others, you take upon yourself the duty of becoming master of every subject you seek to teach. Be not content with dull thoughts, an indolent mind, or a loose memory. It is a noble thing to teach; it is a blessed thing to learn. True knowledge is a precious possession, and the more the teacher has of it, the better will be his work." -- Counsels to Teachers, p. 199, 200

"The religious experience is to a great degree determined by the character of the books you read in your leisure moments." --Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 204

## **7. Radio and Television**

The world of books and the world of radio and TV have so much in common that the counsels already considered, give guidance in both these fields. Since radio and television, as we know them, were still things of the future when Ellen White laid down her pen, they are not mentioned in her writings. Her messages, however, anticipated the coming of these present-day media of communication, as it were, by enunciating basic principles for deciding what to admit to the sensory avenues of the mind. These media now occupy so large a place in modern life that their proper use needs to be brought up repeatedly for review, especially by those who seek perfection of Christian

character. The problems which they give rise to have been repeatedly set forth, so that only a very brief summary may be in order here, as --

1. Depraving of morals and imagination by --
  - a. Base allurements, which leave indelible impressions of foolishness, abandon, violence, immorality, as elements of a good time.
  - b. Atmosphere hostile to thoughts of virtue, nobility, devotion.
2. Inculcation of false philosophy and views of life, as --
  - a. Evil and good blended and glamorized by sensuous appeals.
  - b. Picturing evil as a concomitant of wealth, position, and happiness.
3. Enticements to waste time and money and to set a harmful example.
  - a. Make a movie house out of the home.
  - b. Cause the shared life of the home to become largely inoperative.
  - c. Tend to decentralize the family by providing an avenue of escape from its ideal common center.

Kindly turn back, please, to chapter one: "Reading matter to be shunned" and note the following:

Cruel, horrible doings.

Delineating satanic practices of human beings.

Giving publicity to evil, vice, crime.

History reciting enormities

Immoral books, exciting passion

Pictures, ridiculous, by satanic agencies, impure.

War and bloodshed

"Those who would not fall a prey to Satan's devices, must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts" (AA 518).

If God saw it needful to warn us not to read about the dreadful, satanic deeds listed above, and if one picture is as potent as 10,000 words, as the proverb has it, it is plain that scenes of folly, crime, violence, immorality, are not for Christians to watch. Our editors are admonished not to use in our publications pictures of autos-de-fe or other torture inflicted upon the martyrs (CW 172). Of evil books we are told that there "is a satanic fascination" in them (CT 133). "To the active minds of children and youth, the scenes pictures in imaginary revelations of the future are realities" (MH 444-5). That being the result of mere reading, how much deeper and more indelible an impression is made by pictures! As these scenes are relived again and again, moreover, they become imbedded in memory, until they are almost ineradicable except by divine aid. With each recall to mind, the havoc wrought by the scene is increased.

Our air programs, "Voice of Prophecy," "Faith for Today," "It is Written," and others, proclaim the gospel to millions. It is not possible for us to know all that they accomplish in causing the gospel to "fly in the midst of heaven." It is a privilege to follow them, to invite others to do so, and to support them generously.

Weather reports, newscasts, official announcements, some musical and educational offerings, are good and useful, as we well know.

The difficulty, however, in using these instrumentalities of mass communication, is that the good and useful are so tremendously overbalanced

by the worthless and hurtful as to be practically eclipsed. Time and money are easily squandered. "Our time belongs to God" (COL 342).

It might help us to choose the right path, if every decision to invest in, or use, these media were first made to pass the following tests: (a) will this investment be consistent with my accountability as a steward of my Lord's money? (b) will my example and influence as an owner and user be helpful in the home and elsewhere? (c) as I watch and listen, will I be taking time away from daily tasks, sanctification, self-improvement, Christian ministry?

"Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously. . . that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil." Isaiah 33:14, 15.

"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." Psalm 101:3.

"According to their pasture, so were they filled." Hosea 13:6

"Who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?" Isa. 42:19.

What kind of blindness is this? It is a blindness that will not allow our eyes to contemplate evil. It will not allow our eyes to rest upon iniquity. . . . We want to see aright, we want to see as God sees; for Satan is constantly trying to convert the things our eyes rest upon in order that we may see through his medium. . . .

The servant of the living God sees to some purpose. The eyes are sanctified and the ears are sanctified, and those who will close their eyes and ears to evil will become changed. But if they will listen to those who will address them and try to lead their thoughts away from God and their eternal interests, then their whole senses are perverted by that which their eyes rest upon. Jesus says, 'If . . . thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.' Matt. 6:22, 23.

It makes every difference what we give our minds and souls to feed upon. We can let our minds dwell upon romance and castle-building, and what will it do for us? It will ruin us, soul and body. . . . We want to have that power that will enable us to close our eyes to scenes that are not elevating, and that are not ennobling, will not purify and refine us; and to keep our ears closed to everything that is forbidden in God's word. He forbids us to imagine evil, to speak evil, even to think evil" (HC 334).

"Almost unconsciously the reader is influenced by the spirit of the writer." --Testimonies, vol. 7, p. 203.

"One of the chief causes of mental inefficiency and moral weakness is the lack of concentration for worthy ends." --Education, p. 189.

"We pride ourselves on the wide distribution of literature; but the multiplication of books, even books that in themselves are not harmful, may be a positive evil. With the immense tide of printed matter constantly pouring from the presses, old and young for the habit of reading hastily and superficially, and the mind loses its power of connected and vigorous thought." --Education, p. 189.

"A large class of the periodicals and books that, like the frogs of Egypt, are overspreading the land, are not only commonplace, idle, and enervating, but unclean and degrading. Their effect is not merely to intoxicate and ruin the mind, but to corrupt and destroy the soul." --Education, p. 190.

"All who engage in the acquisition of knowledge should strive to reach the highest round of the ladder." --Counsels to Teachers, p. 394.

"Keep reaching higher and still higher." --Testimonies, vol. 7, p. 281.

## 8 The Shining Way

Good reading takes one on journeys through scenic lands, to wealth and enjoyment, to durable riches and pleasures. It (a) adds to useful knowledge, to sound judgment, to a sense of values; (b) enlarges the powers of expression; (c) broadens sympathy; (d) helps assimilate the human to the divine.

How to read? (a) diligently, utilizing even fragments of time as precious for self-improvement. "Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time." COL 342; (b) widely, in all useful knowledge, for growth in effectiveness, but with respect to guidelines; (c) discriminatingly: some rapidly, some slowly. "There is much good reading that is not sanctifying." FE 547. "There are many beliefs that the mind has no right to entertain." COL 39; (d) temperately: not to excess or to the neglect of devotions or other duty. It is not an end in itself, but a means "to the glory of God." 1 Cor. 10:31.

We gaze at the world of good reading! The expanse stretches away, with its inspiring vistas, its far horizons telling of still more to be explored. Could one spend a lifetime in such reading, there would be still more beyond. As the tempter led Eve to turn from the glories of Eden and feel that the one fruit was indispensable to her happiness and advancement, so he tempts us -- more deceptively, too, than in the garden, after millenniums of practice.

Archaeology, biography, history, current events, nature, travel, astronomy, the devotional life, chemistry, electronics, missions, clean humor, the fine arts -- how appealingly the list lengthens! Who can estimate correctly the harvest to be reaped from even the one field of biography? And above all these, the Spirit of Prophecy. And above all else the Book of books.

"It is acquaintance that awakens sympathy, and sympathy is the spring of effective ministry" (Ed 269). Like Enoch, like John the Baptist, like Jesus we are to be thoughtful observers of men and events. It is important -- it is necessary -- that we become acquainted with the world around us, going to people, showing an intelligent interest in their work and problems, studying how to meet them where they are and help them, so that we may learn the most favorable avenue of approach to bring them the riches of the gospel. Good reading can show ways to capture attention, arouse interest, and fix it upon things of eternal value.

In Ellen White's words "there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed" (Joshua 13:1). These writings are God's oracles committed to the remnant to bless them and, through them, to bless all men. Is there in all the world any other people entrusted for today with such a treasure as this is? Tempted to depression by the daily struggle within, by the pruning, the hewing

and squaring, have we perhaps forgotten at times to duly sense our exalted privileges and failed to give God praise for this last-day gift? How Satan hates it! Could it be that in order to receive latter-rain fervor and power, we must return to "first love" for, and obedience to, the Spirit of Prophecy?

The range of her writings is most impressive. How meaningful and sure also are the pronouncements on each of the many and diverse subjects! In vital principles, in comprehensiveness, in orientation, could all the secular works ever written on education, for example, equal the books *Education*, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*? These books are the gospel in education. Are there not honest souls among the higher classes who will say as they read these counsels and see them applied, "This is a wise and understanding people and God is with them"? Duly shared with neighbors and professionals these golden volumes can speak to their hearts with converting power. Let us so labor that our practices shall ever demonstrate our reverence for their authority.

In the E. G. White writings, valuable things lie beneath the surface, waiting for the searcher, that the truths enfolded may be opened to view, bringing enrichment to others and honor to the Giver. Many seminal like utterances, filled with meaning and relationships, are to be found: electric power of the brain and in the nerve impulses (2T 347, 3T 157). Electricity and plant growth (COL 63). Socialism is not in God's plan for the human family (4T 552). Brain power is to be utilized in the tilling of the soil (TM 243-5). "There are life-giving properties in the balsam of the pine, and in the fragrance of the cedar and the fir. And there are other trees that are health-promoting" (7T 77). "It takes much study to learn how to study" (5T 524). The words, often challenging, are sometimes almost provocative. Beneath each such utterance lies, unflinching, a vein of rich ore. No false leads. The book *Recharging Man's Vital Force* is a good example of research in this field. Written by Elder Willis J. Hackett, now President of the North Pacific Union Conference, the volume offers the reader the fruit of years of study of the action of electricity in the human system. In her writings are openings awaiting Adventist research, openings "provided by the kind forethought of God." How tragic that we have so largely and so long neglected them! "And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail" (Deut. 28:13).

The brain is doubtless the highest part of creation in this world. Its possibilities pass comprehension. Not the least of its marvels is this: its capacity is limitless. Now, it can become weary and require rest. But the mind cannot be filled full. Ever and always it has room for more. We can keep adding to its store endlessly. Freed at translation from sin's effects, this same brain we now use will continue through eternity. The mind is like an ever-widening, ever-deepening reservoir, to whose contents we are to keep joyously adding everlastingly.

Good reading attracts the mind upward above the trivial, the low, the depressing. It gives fellowship with the choicest spirits among men. Its cleansing power can reanimate. It can uncover new ideas, quicken invention, stir the thirst for discovery. And not only may increased knowledge and inspiration result from it. Unguessed aptitudes awaken at the quickening touch. The mental faculties expand. The thoughts take new direction. As we

read, we grow. Heaven's program, to read and read, on and on, is not only for leaders, who need to read more and more widely than many others, but for all: ceaseless advance toward God's ever-distant ideal for His children. To be the most alert, the best informed, the best read people in the world, is truly a high calling – and privilege and joy.

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#### Errata

51. Line 8 from bottom, phrases for "pharases."  
74. Line 2 from bottom should come after line 2 of paragraph 3.  
75. Line 8 from bottom, (BD+>He wrote to for "He went to Washington."  
78. Line 1 of paragraph 5, her for "here".  
79. Line 4 of paragraph 2, insert In principle, before "It topples."  
87. Line 9 of paragraph 2, may for "man."  
103. Line 15, indelible, for "indellible."