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# The Prophetic

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“For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he” (Luke 7:28).

No greater prophet than John? That would include, apparently, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, even Moses. Yet, according to Jesus, *John was the greatest of them all*. How fascinating, especially because, unlike Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and Moses—John the Baptist had no writings in the Bible, and yet John was a greater prophet than all those who, at least before him, did!

*The prophetic gift wasn't limited only to the prophets whose writing became Scripture.*

The point? The prophetic gift wasn't limited only to the prophets whose writing became Scripture. No, the prophetic gift included those whose work for the Lord involved something other than writing books

of the Bible.

The whole question of the prophetic gift, and of inspiration in general, has been a source of discussion and debate throughout church history. How were the prophets inspired? How do inspiration and revelation work? How much, if any, of culture and personal views appear in the writings of the prophets? If these questions still generate discussion within Christendom after centuries of debate, we're hardly going to solve them all in the *Adult Bible Study Guide* this quarter. But we'll sure do our best to try.

Issues regarding the nature of the prophetic gift and inspiration have been especially important to Seventh-day Adventists. In the book of Revelation, God promised that there will be a special manifestation of the prophetic gift at the time of the end (*Rev. 12:17; 19:10; 22:8, 9*). Seventh-day Adventists believe that the gift of prophecy has been manifested in the ministry of Mrs. Ellen G. White (1827–1915). For seven decades she gave messages of counsel and warning to our church; and though she died in 1915, her books, full of spiritual insights and counsel, have been a source of tremendous blessing to

# Gift

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countless millions whose lives have been, and continue to be, spiritually and theologically enriched through them. We truly have been given a gift.

Yet, questions remain. What is the role of the prophetic gift? If we claim the Bible as our final authority, what authority (if any) should the Spirit of Prophecy have? How should these writings be interpreted? Though this gift has been a blessing, in what ways has it been misused?

More than three decades have gone by since we last studied in Sabbath School the topic of the gift of prophecy. Since then the church has grown from 2.5 million members to more than 15 million (as of this writing). And though there are questions about the Spirit of Prophecy (along with the prophetic gift in general) that remain unanswered, we believe we've been given more than enough reasons to believe in this special manifestation of prophecy among us.

However, the real focus of this lesson isn't just on the gift but on the Gift-Giver. As we study the question of inspiration and revelation, we'll learn about the Lord who loves this world so much He gave of Himself, in the person of Jesus, as the sacrifice for our sins. Though God, though sinless, though the Creator Himself, He became a human being, and in that humanity took upon Himself the punishment for our evil as the only way that we, as sinners, could stand pardoned and justified before Him.

That's the God we serve, and that's the God we seek to reveal in this quarter's lessons.

*Gerhard Pfandl, a native of Austria, has been associate director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference since 1999.*

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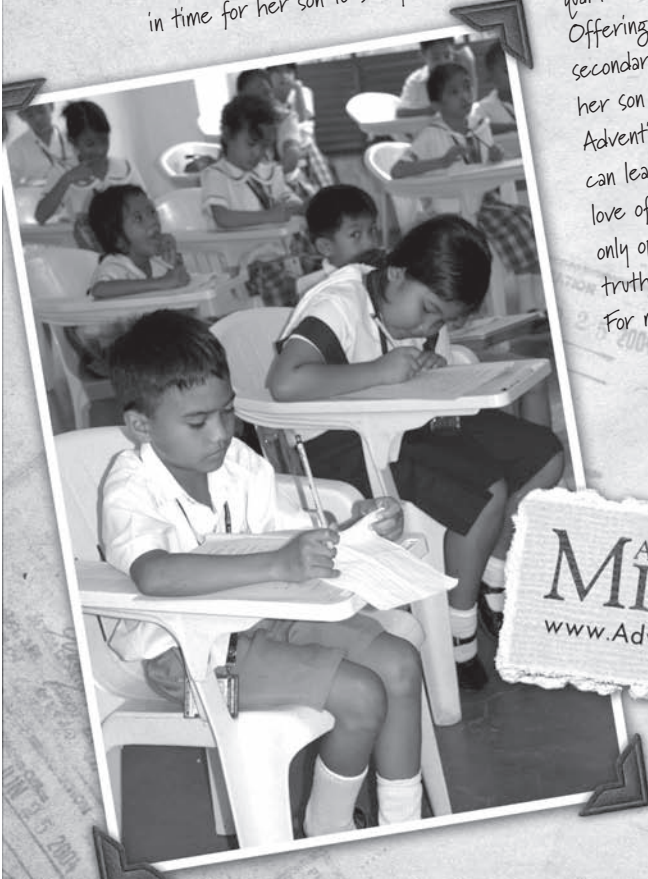
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The school in southern Philippines is bright and clean. Rebar juts from the roof where the school's second story secondary school will someday stand.

A student's mother approaches and follows my gaze to the rebar. "We are not Adventists," she offers. "But we love this school. My boys started studying here before this building was erected. The old school was pretty bad, but that didn't matter to us. We're happy with the education our sons are receiving." Then she grows quiet. "Our oldest son will graduate this year, and the secondary school won't be ready for him."

I see her yearning and I wish I could do something to finish the school in time for her son to study there. Then I realize that part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help build this secondary school. Maybe her son can still study in an Adventist school, where he can learn more about the love of God. It may be his only opportunity to hear the truth. I want him to know. For me it's personal.



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