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June 16, 2010

Ellen White on "Our College"



Ellen White

There is danger that our college will be turned away from its original design. God's purpose has been made known, that our people should have an opportunity to study the sciences and at the same time to learn the requirements of His word. Biblical lectures should be given; the study of the Scriptures should have the first place in our system of education.

Students are sent from a great distance to attend the college at Battle Creek for the very purpose of receiving instruction from the lectures on Bible subjects. But for one or two years past there has been an effort to mold our school after other colleges. *When this is done, we can give no encouragement to parents to send their children to Battle Creek College. . . .*

No other study will so ennoble every thought, feeling, and aspiration as the study of the Scriptures. This Sacred Word is the will of God revealed to men. Here we may learn what God expects of the beings formed in His image. . . .

In God's word alone we find an authentic account of creation. Here we behold the power that laid the foundation of the earth and that stretched out the heavens. Here only can we find a history of our race, unsullied by human prejudice or human pride. . . .

Some may urge that if religious teaching is to be made prominent our school will become unpopular; that those who are not of our faith will not patronize the college. Very well, then, let them go to other colleges, where they will find a system of education that suits their taste. Our school was established, not merely to teach the sciences, but for the purpose of giving instruction in the great principles of God's word and in the practical duties of everyday life. . . .

This is the education so much needed at the present time. If a worldly influence is to bear sway in our school, then sell it out to worldlings and let them take the entire control; and those who have invested their means in that institution will

establish another school, to be conducted, not upon the plan of popular schools, nor according to the desires of principal and teachers, but upon the plan which God has specified. . . . Our college stands today in a position that God does not approve (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 21-27, emphasis supplied).

These are excerpts from several pages of one testimony, but if one reads the larger context, I think it will be seen that this is a fair representation of Ellen White's public messages and concerns regarding Battle Creek in 1881.

- Why do you think Mrs. White was willing to publicly criticize an Adventist educational institution?
- Do you think only a prophet should engage in this kind of public critique?
- If similar circumstances would exist today as those described by Ellen White, should the church and its leaders have any role in warning its members?
- If so, who should play that role, and how should they carry it out?

Posted by [Nicholas Miller](#) on June 16, 2010 in [Adventist Studies](#), [Quotable](#), [Science and Theology](#) | [Permalink](#)

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The question "why" begs the counter-question "why not". Why would there be an issue over Ellen White criticizing Battle Creek College? Are there reasons that would give Ellen White pause in criticizing the development of Battle Creek College's educational strategy? What assumptions are we making when we ask why a prophet, a leader, a church member would be willing to criticize an institution that serves the collective organization they belong to?

Okay, enough questions . . . I personally think that the design of our educational institutions should not be under the exclusive control of a select few but ought to represent the collective strategy of our church. What I mean by "the church" is the body of Christ not a formal organization. Our schools were established to serve the body of Christ in providing an environment where our young people would learn in the presence of the Holy Spirit, where those are gathered that are drawn to Him. I think Ellen White is appealing to the Church, the body of Christ, not the leadership of the school.

Ellen White in her critique is not only exercising her role as a prophet but as a member of the body of Christ. Yet perhaps, the two are not mutually exclusive. Perhaps a prophet is a member of the body of Christ. Perhaps it is we who elevate her to something we do not see ourselves capable of. Is Ellen White the Moses who we, as the Israelites did, place her between us and God so that we would not enter into an intimate relationship with Him? Aren't we all called to be members of the body whose works are of the Father not of ourselves, revealing the power of God in a manner greater than those who came before us? If so then we are all called to not just criticize but participate in the body of Christ, allowing ourselves to be His vessels and be coordinated to His perfect will. Each of us ought to share in the development, exercise, support and planning of the institutions that bear our name. We are all of us heirs to the kingdom, sons and daughters of God and therefore stewards of the material instruments He utilizes to accomplish His purpose.

Posted by: [David de la Vega](#) | [June 16, 2010 at 06:28 PM](#)

David Koresh believed in the second coming, and so do you. Plenty of apostates accept your logical premises about the heavenly sanctuary. Beliefs are not the only determining factor in telling a person's philosophy.

Posted by: [Alexander Carpenter](#) | [June 16, 2010 at 10:24 PM](#)

David, I appreciate your putting Mrs. White's comments into the perspective of the body of Christ. It brings to mind Moses' comments when told that others in the camp were prophesying, "I would that they were all prophets . . ." Certainly, a prophet at times has access to information that others do not, and thus may have a more frequent role in public guidance for the church. But constructive critique and even rebuke in the Bible was not limited to those with special revelatory powers. Respectfully and appropriately holding each other accountable, including our institutions, seems to be a duty and responsibility that comes from being part of the body of Christ generally.

Alex, your comment is puzzling and think that it perhaps was misplaced here, perhaps you were intending to respond to another blog, I'm not sure. If it is intentionally placed here, you will need to clarify your point. Thanks.

Posted by: [Nicholas Miller](#) | [June 17, 2010 at 10:26 AM](#)

Education is at its best when the community and the institution are able to communicate their expectations. Ellen White may have been

asked her views on the direction of the school. She had the right to publicly critique the school as both a church member and as a prophet particularly if she disagreed. I think it is important to have a framework which allows for check and balances in christian education. I believe that as a community of believers, we have the right to voice our opinions about a school system that might be heading in the wrong direction. Church leaders have an important responsibility to share their views and blow the whistle if the path taken is the wrong one. Leaders need to ensure that Christian education is in line with the Bible. After all education should be meeting the needs and broadening the horizons for the community and those participating in the educational process.

Posted by: James McNeil II | [June 17, 2010 at 05:06 PM](#)

Excellent article by N.Miller,Memory,Meaning& Faith

Ah...leadership,leadership,God bless them,may they respond

Hesitant Leadership is Weak Leadership-" It is even more excusable

to make a wrong decision than to be continually in a wavering position;

to be hesitating,sometimes inclined in one direction,then in another.More

perplexity and wretchedness result from this hesitating and doubting than from sometimes moving too hastily. I have been shown that the most signal victories and the most fearful defeats have been on the turn of minutes.God

requires promptness of action.Delays,doubtings,hesitation,and indecision give the enemy every advantage. Gospel Workers p134

Posted by: [carl carnes](#) | [June 20, 2010 at 06:04 PM](#)

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