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2011 Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium: Devotional

Angelika Kaiser

Andrews University, angelika@andrews.edu

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Memory, Meaning & Faith

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March 29, 2011

2011 Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium: Devotional

2011 Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium

Every year the [Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary](#), in association with the [Center for Adventist Research](#) and the [Ellen G. White Estate](#) hosts an [Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium](#) in order to highlight current research and discuss new questions relating to her work and ministry. This year, on March 28, 2011, is the seventh such symposium (download the program (PDF) [here](#)). In the following days, Memory, Meaning & Faith will give summaries of the proceedings by our web editor, [Angelika Kaiser](#)*.

Devotional

Dwight K. Nelson, Senior Pastor of the [Pioneer Memorial Church](#) of Seventh-day Adventists, on the Campus of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, MI, opens this year's Ellen White Symposium with a devotional entitled "The Gift".

The Fruits. After reading [Matthew 7:15-20](#), Nelson pointed to a [survey](#) by pollster [George Barna](#) on authors which pastors consider as most influential in their library and life. The surveyed pastors under 40 championed, among John Ortberg, Thom Rainer and others Ellen White as one of the most influential authors. - Just recently (March 17, 2011), USA Today published an [article](#) on "Adventist's back-to-basics faith" in which interviewed professor of Fuller Theological Seminary [Daniel Shaw](#) utters his astonishment on the growth of Adventism. - The *Christian Science Monitor's* [article](#) from November 15, 2010 entitled "For real education reform, take a cue from the Adventists" deals with the role, the Adventist holistic educational system could play as a model for educational reform. Nelson pointed to these examples as to "good fruits" of the ministry of Ellen G. White.

The Endgame. According to [Revelation 12:17](#) the dragon was enraged with the woman and went after her and her offspring. Nelson pointed to the description that the woman and her offspring have the testimony of Jesus Christ - not so much their testimony about him, but His own testimony - which is the Spirit of Prophecy ([Rev 19:10](#)). The reason for the dragon's rage is explained simply with [Rev 1:1-3](#), said Nelson: the testimony of Jesus sheds light on the endgame between God and Satan, and reveals how God's plan, but also how the dragon's plans are. In this cosmic conflict we are all caught up.

If he were the dragon, Nelson said, he would pursue two strategies: 1) to ravage the author and her writings so that no one will read her and 2) to overemphasize the author and her writings so that no one will read her. Both has happened unfortunately with tremendous success. Nelson also pointed to a publication of [John N. Andrews](#), in which he reflected on the church's position in 1870 on the "[Use of the Visions of Sr. White](#)". There in points # 19 and 20 Andrews pointed to the importance of the gift of prophecy and its divine origin as well as stating that church members should "candidly acquaint themselves with the visions of [Ellen] White. ... We believe that every person standing thus and carrying out this purpose will be guided in the way of truth and righteousness". Both aspects echoed in Nelson's suggestion, that we should adopt the Kellogg's Cornflakes slogan "Taste Them Again for the First Time!". We should come back to what we thought we grew out of. Taking anew one or two books by Ellen White and reading them, brooding over them. Nelson asked: "What would happen if we would not just give lip-service to the reading of this gift, but actually read it?"

The Research. Roger L. Dudley and Des Cummings Jr. (then Institute of Church Ministry) had conducted a [survey](#) on factors relating to church growth in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Inserted was only one question whether the interviewed person reads Ellen G. White regularly. Those of the interviewed 249 SDA pastors and 8,211 SDA

church members, who checked this question, ranked significantly higher in all questions, e.g. strong relationship with Christ, salvation assurance, daily bible study and prayer, active missionary and church involvement, etc.

The Passion. In his years of reading of Ellen White's writings, Pastor Nelson has discovered "three fiery passions of this 5 foot 2 inches tall woman": 1) A passion for the Savior (e.g. *Steps to Christ*, p.70-71). Nelson is convinced that he did not encounter an author more christocentric than Ellen White - and he reads widely and a lot, as he stated. 2) A passion for the Word of God (*Testimonies*, vol 6, p.393). The study by Dudley and Cummings shows, according to Nelson, that there is a direct connection between reading Ellen White and personal bible study: "You treat the Word as you treat her!" 3) A passion for the salvation of the lost. Referring to White's own words found in *Testimonies*, vol 9, p.101-103, Nelson quoted her: "As I have thought of that cup trembling in the hands of Christ; as I have realized that He might have refused to drink, and left the world to perish in its sin, I have pledged that every energy of my life should be devoted to the work of winning souls to Him". "Can it get more passionate than this?", Nelson asked. "Young wife, young mother, writer, leader, visionary, missionary, counselor, 70 years, 7 decades of ministry... *By their fruits you will know them.*"

The Fruits Redux. Some obvious fruits of the gift and ministry of Ellen G. White:

- She is considered today the third most translated author in history and most translated American author (male or female).
- Her literary production: approximate total of 100,000 pages, or around 25 million words.
- Ten years ago, 128 titles were in print bearing her name, including books which are compilations.
- As fruit of her ministry and leadership, God raised up the Seventh-day Adventist Church to become: largest Protestant educational, health and publishing system in the world today; most expansive Protestant missions outreach in the world today, with SDA-Church in more countries than any other denomination.
- He, Dwight Nelson, has personally tasted the fruit of this woman's life and ministry and is convinced that she was indeed called and gifted by Christ to work in this special way.

Concluding with a personal testimony, Nelson talked about his time as a Seminary student at Andrews University, when a former teacher, the late Hans K. LaRondelle challenged his students to take David's words in Psalm 19:12 seriously in their own personal life. Nelson did, and "all hell broke loose", as some weeks later he suddenly became terribly aware of his own sinfulness and of evil behavior that he had not taken seriously before. In his agony he approached his teacher, LaRondelle with the question, what he should do. LaRondelle, being "old school", just dismissed him with the words: "Read *Steps to Christ!*" Dwight Nelson did - and found a Savior and Friend in Christ. White's writings were Jesus' strategic move to work in Nelson's own life.

This gift of the Spirit is authentic, it's a gift of Jesus, if we would only taste it for the first time.


"By their fruits you will know them..."

* Please note that this and other articles on the presentations held are condensed summaries in which some lines of argumentation have been abbreviated. All papers/presentations will be published in a revised form in the *Journal Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium*, vol. 7, 2011, at the next Symposium, i.e. March or April 2012. Orders can be made to the [Center for Adventist Research](#).

Posted by [Angelika Kaiser](#) on March 29, 2011 in [Adventist Studies](#), [Church History](#), [Ellen White Symposium](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Just to correct a couple impressions regarding current media coverage of Adventists. The article in the CSM hailing Adventist education was written by a La Sierra professor. And the GC office of archives and statistics show the church growing at ~2.13%, as opposed to the 2.5% reported in USA today. This may affect whether Adventists are indeed the fastest growing denomination in North America.

Posted by: [David Hamstra](#) | [March 29, 2011 at 09:38 AM](#)

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