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Memory, Meaning & Faith

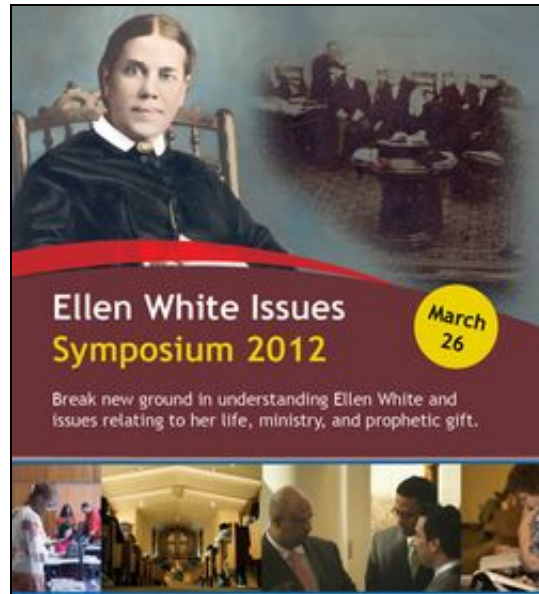
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March 27, 2012

2012 Ellen White Issues Symposium: "Ellen White and Me"



Presentation

Roger L. Dudley* presented the opening reflection on the topic "Ellen White and Me." The following exposition summarizes his reflection by rendering the main points of his presentation.

Ellen White and Me

Dr. Dudley informed the audience that his presentation would primarily not be an informational one, but rather a personal reflection. That includes his way of calling her: he does not call her *Spirit of Prophecy* since he believes that she was not the Spirit of Prophecy but was rather filled and led by him. *Sister White* sounds too formal and institutional to him, so he sticks to *Ellen* or *Ellen White*.

Dudley began his presentation with quoting [Acts 10:33](#): "So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God." Dudley took this text as encouraging him (and others) to also listen to what God has communicated through Ellen White.

Teaching

Dudley, having taught for several years (elementary and academy level), came to appreciate one book by Ellen White in particular: *Education*. Since he found it very inspiring, he read it several times. One passage became especially important to him and helped him to focus on the most important thing as an educator and teacher: "To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life." (*Education*, p. 15-16)

As a teacher, the writings of White helped him to understand that he was not in the classroom to merely teach Bible facts and

information. Rather he discerned much higher than filling his students with information. He wanted his students to have positive experiences in regard to the subject matter they were learning. Also the teaching of the Bible should be positive and connected with successful requirements. White contributed a lot to this understanding of his, for example by the following statement: "It is the work of true education to thinkers and not just reflectors of other men's thoughts" (*Education*, p.17).

Dudley uttered concern that in ministry critical thinking is often times not appreciated, nor encouraged - especially, of course, when that thinking goes contrary to what one thinks oneself. When in 5th grade, Dudley had a teacher who used to say: "Who gave you permission to think?" She thought that there is and can be only one right answer. Although he never heard this notion expressed so blatantly since then, he encountered this kind of thinking in different contexts, also in all kinds of church environment. Ellen White clearly speaks against this - and we should think ourselves and encourage others to think for themselves.

As Jesus Did

In whatever function Dudley worked during his career, he always wished to do things as Jesus did: teaching, ministering to others, living. "He who seeks to transform humanity must himself understand humanity. Only through sympathy, faith, and love can men be reached and uplifted. Here Christ stands revealed as the master teacher; of all that ever dwelt on the earth, He alone has perfect understanding of the human soul... In every human being, however fallen, He beheld a Son of God, one who might be restored to the privilege of his divine relationship." (*Education*, p. 78-79)

In his ministry, Dudley experienced the depth of the following statement: "It is Christ's work "to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, ... to set at liberty them that are bruised." Luke 4:18. In this work we are to co-operate. "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ... restore such an one." Galatians 6:1. The word here translated "restore" means to put in joint, as a dislocated bone. How suggestive the figure! He who falls into error or sin is thrown out of relation to everything about him. He may realize his error, and be filled with remorse; but he cannot recover himself. He is in confusion and perplexity, worsted and helpless. He is to be reclaimed, healed, re-established. "Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one." Only the love that flows from the heart of Christ can heal. Only he in whom that love flows, even as the sap in the tree or the blood in the body, can restore the wounded soul." (*Education*, p. 113)

In the last Sabbath School quarter, so Dudley, the book of Galatians was studied and he observed that a group in a church he was visiting was wondering, in referring to Gal 6, whether or not believers should address personal problems and sins of friends and family at all or just be totally silent about it out of various reasons. Then these words of this verse came to his mind, also in connection with Ellen's words: "ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness" (Gal 6:1). He concluded that if I see things that truly concern his spirit and if he sees the need, he can and should help people and in love point to things.

Dudley shared a very beloved memory from his time as a teacher, when he did several creative projects with students, where everyone could choose what he/she wanted to do. One student wanted to set a statement by Ellen White to music and chose the words: "No outward observances can take the place of simple faith and entire renunciation of self. But no man can empty himself of self. We can only consent for Christ to accomplish the work. Then the language of the soul will be, Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Thy love can flow through my soul." (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 159) These words already were and became even more precious to him during the following years, that he prays them every morning as part of his personal devotion.

Love for Others

Thinking about his ministry, Dudley sometimes wondered how he can be equipped to serve people by truly understanding and loving them. Ellen had several things to say about that topic as well. "Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is every one who is the property of God." (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 376) We should never base our love to anybody on race or gender or denomination and such. My responsibility is to relate to everyone as a child of God.

Dudley appreciated that in her writings, in accordance with Scripture, White repeatedly called to harmony and a loving

attitude especially towards those, with which we disagree, and how we can shape difficult relationships. Dudley testified that he experienced many instances where her writings were inspirational and very practical in their counsels.

Marriage

Working with his wife on many marriage and family seminars and counseling sessions, Dudley often found guidance and practical counsel himself in the writings of Ellen. "Determine to be all that it is possible to be to each other. Continue the early attentions. In every way encourage each other in fighting the battles of life. Study to advance the happiness of each other. Let there be mutual love, mutual forbearance. Then marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be as it were the very beginning of love. The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven." (*Ministry of Healing*, p.360)

Dudley concluded his personal reflection with the assessment: "She truly became a very dear friend."




*[Roger L. Dudley](#), Ed.D, is director of the Institute of Church Ministry and Emeritus Professor of Christian Ministry at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Dudley served as a teacher, school principal, pastor, youth ministries director, and superintendent of education in several eastern states. He joined the Andrews University Seminary faculty in January 1980. He is the author, co-author, or editor of 15 books. In addition, he has had over 170 articles published; has directed the preparation of more than 75 unpublished research studies, and has presented 58 papers at professional meetings.

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