

Spirit of Prophecy Perspectives: Education's Grand Theme¹

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This Statement on educational philosophy before us today² could not have been written if Ellen G. White had not existed. The Adventist educational philosophy is one more example of how Ellen G. White fulfilled her job description: “to comfort His people and to correct those who err from Bible truth” (*Early writings*, p. 78). We can survey the scores of educational philosophies from Plato to the latest theory off the press and we will not find anywhere else, anything like this Statement now before us. All other theories are, at best, only partial glimpses of truth in a vast sea of contradictions. Ellen G. White did something unique when she unfolded her philosophy of education—she began with a theological principle that determined everything she wrote on “education.”

That theological principle has been called “the great controversy theme.” This theme is reflected in our Statement’s philosophical “assumptions.”³ Many of these assumptions are shared by other Christian denominations. But we go further. We see the sin problem as more than human mistakes and shortcomings. We see sin as rebellion, a product of thinking and doing in contradiction to the will of God; that sin is a cosmic problem, not simply a personal matter. Even further, we see the sin problem as an outgrowth of wrong representations of God and that the solution to this cosmic rebellion involves telling the truth about God and His attitudes

¹An abstract of “How the Book, *Education*, Unfolds the Great Controversy Theme,” a presentation at NAD Teachers Convention, Dallas, Texas, August, 2000. See <http://circle.adventist.org/download/EdThemeGC.pdf>.

²International Conference on the Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Education, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, April 8, 2001.

³*Loc. cit.*

toward men and women. And even further, we see God telling His side of the conflict primarily through the Bible and especially in the life of Jesus; through Him we learn of His plan to rescue us from our massive sin problem. And still further, we learn that He does not force His solution on anybody. He simply invites us to listen to Him and trust Him as He shows us how He plans to reverse the damage that sin has caused, both in our own lives and on this planet. That plan is unfolded in what we call Christian education. It includes far more than other philosophies of Christian education because it is based on a far more complete understanding of the gospel.

Nowhere else on this planet, among all the theologians and philosophers that people love to quote, will we find this core Biblical plan of salvation unfolded, except in the writings of Ellen G. White, and probably never more clearly than in her book *Education* (now adapted as *True education*). The “Philosophy” section of our Statement builds, remarkably, on the distinctive understanding of this plan by highlighting the connection between the plan of redemption and the aim of education. Again, the Adventist understanding of “redemption” involves far more than other Christian philosophies of education, primarily because of their limited understanding of the gospel¹.

Let’s examine in a quick flyby how this great controversy principle frames three areas: (a) the way we should train and select our teachers, (b) the kind of methodology we should aim at, and (c) how this principle should determine the intent of our total campus curriculum, involving all classes, departments, and schools on all levels. Let’s ask Ellen to answer for herself as we listen to her speak primarily from her classic book *Education*:

¹The purpose of the gospel, as we will see shortly, involves restoration of all that has been damaged through sin; it includes the grace that pardons as well as the grace that empowers (*Education*, pp 36, 291). The everlasting gospel changes sinners from rebels to happy overcomers, fit and safe to live forever.

Q. Ellen, what is the great controversy theme?

A. The great controversy theme is the “grand central thought, . . . the central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other clusters. [It is] the redemption plan [which is] the restoration in the human soul of the image of God” (*Education*, 1903, p. 125).

Q. Ellen, what is the built-in promise of the great controversy theme?

A. “From the first intimation of hope in . . . Eden to that last glorious promise in the Revelation . . . the burden of every book and every passage of the Bible is the unfolding of this wondrous theme—man’s uplifting,—the power of God ‘which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ 1 Cor. 15:57” (*Education*, pp. 125, 126)¹.

[We can not overemphasize the simple, yet distinctive, importance of this promise and focus—God has put the integrity of His universe on the line when He promises to provide all that is necessary to supply true believers with whatever is necessary to overcome all habits and tendencies of sin. We call this “power of God,” “grace.” This should be the permeating atmosphere in every classroom, from K-16 and beyond.]

Q. Ellen, when we talk about restoration being the purpose of the great controversy theme, are we also talking about the purpose of the gospel as well?

A. “The very essence of the gospel is restoration” (*The desire of ages*, 1898, p. 824).

¹The book *Education* was first published in 1903. Typical of the writings of her day, Ellen G. White used the masculine singular form when addressing humanity as a whole rather than the more inclusive language of today.

of sin; it means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It . . . means a heart emptied of self. . . . The glory, the fullness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life" (*Christ's object lessons*, 1900, pp. 419, 420).

Q. Ellen, what's the connection between this theological theme and the Adventist philosophy of education?

A. They have the same purpose and goal: "To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created,— . . .this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life" (*Education*, 1903, pp. 15, 16).

[Here, we must recognize that our understanding of redemption (the purpose of the gospel) is far different from others with their limited gospels. Even understanding what Jesus is now doing for us as our High Priest places a distinctiveness on the larger picture of what is involved in "redemption." Almost every scholar who has left our church in the last 100 years rejected this truth regarding what Jesus is doing now for His people on earth. Their problem with Christ's role as High Priest as He finishes His role in "cleansing the heavenly sanctuary" lies precisely with their limited grasp of the gospel that has focused primarily on Christ's work as Sacrifice. They separated what Jesus did on the Cross from what He is doing as "all-powerful Mediator" and thus limited the grand scope of the gospel (*The great controversy*, 1888, p. 488).]

Q. Ellen, how does the great controversy theme help us in a practical way in our work as educators?

A. The Lord showed me how to build my educational theory. "The student should learn to view the [Scriptures] as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their

workings. . . . He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience, how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how . . . he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found" (*Education*, 1903, p. 190).

[Here again, Ellen is placing the philosophy of education within an urgent eschatological framework. This urgency should breathe through an Adventist philosophy of education. Adventists, for many reasons, believe that we are living in the final days of this controversy. We don't want to see our students earn all A's in their preparation for a job on earth and yet flunk "Life 101!"]

Q. But, Ellen, is all this theology important or crucial to an educational philosophy?

A. Like a laser beam. "In order to understand what is comprehended in the work of education, we need to consider both [1] the nature of man and [2] the purpose of God in creating him. We need to consider also [3] the change in man's condition through . . . a knowledge of evil, and [4] God's plan for fulfilling His glorious purpose in the education of the human race" (*Education*, pp. 14, 15).

[Again, we see how Ellen had the larger view of "redemption" in mind: the great controversy theme is focused primarily on God's vindication—the same focus that should motivate our lives so that we keep our minds on God's honor and not on our personal salvation. Our eyes should be focused on how God is completing the finishing of the great controversy as it focuses on what Jesus is doing now as our High Priest—thus, lifting our eyes off our self-absorbed burdens. The larger view of the gospel keeps Jesus in front as our Saviour and Example and not in our rearview mirror as a scowling traffic cop. It releases us from being self-centered about our own salvation and focused on how we can honor the name of God (see *Patriarchs and prophets*, p. 68), which is exactly what has been the cen-

ter of the cosmic conflict since its beginning when Satan maligned the character and name of God.]

Q. Ellen, are you suggesting that all teachers should be students of the great controversy theme, even if they teach math, literature, physics, history, psychology, or whatever?

A. Without question. All our fields of study will be “infinitely” more meaningful when they are viewed in relation to the Bible’s “grand central thought. Viewed in the light of this thought, every topic has a new significance” (*Education*, p. 125).

Q. Ellen, what are some of the underlying principles unfolded in the great controversy theme?

A. Satan started the controversy with his envy and selfishness. Thus, “unselfishness, the principle of God’s kingdom, is the principle that Satan hates; Its very existence he denies. From the beginning of the great controversy he has endeavored to prove God’s principles of action to be selfish, and he deals in the same way with all who serve God. To disprove Satan’s claim is the work of Christ and of all who bear His name” (*Education*, p. 154).

[That means, all subject areas will become more meaningful and relevant to students, as well as to their teachers, only when each particular area of study is seen in relationship to the great controversy theme.]

Q. Ellen, are you saying that one of the prime reasons for Jesus coming to earth was to prove Satan wrong and God right about how to run the universe?

A. Right! “It was to give in His own life an illustration of unselfishness that Jesus came in the form of humanity. And all who accept this principle are to be workers together with Him in demonstrating it in practical life” (*Education*, p. 154).

Q. Ellen, can you give us a practical application of this incarnation principle?

A. “Very early in the history of the world is given the life-record of one over whom this controversy of Satan’s was waged. [Then follows a review of Job’s experience.] According to his faith, so it came to pass. By his [Job’s] patient endurance he vindicated his own character, and thus the character of Him whose representative he was” (*Education*, pp. 155, 156).

[We are focusing on a much deeper and higher definition of character than generally applauded. After all, Hitler’s educational philosophy focused also on developing “character”!]

Q. Ellen, are you suggesting that human beings are to do for God’s character and government what Job and Jesus did?

A. Yes. That’s the point of the great controversy theme! “In Him [Jesus] was found the perfect ideal. To reveal this ideal as the only true standard for attainment; to show what every human being might become; what, through the indwelling of humanity by divinity, all who received Him would become—for this, Christ came to this world. He came to show how men are to be trained as benefits the sons of God; how . . . they are to practice the principles and to live the life of heaven” (*Education*, pp. 73, 74).

Q. Ellen, are you suggesting that teachers today can implement, even reproduce, our Lord’s educational theory and practice?

A. Without question. “The presence of the same Guide in educational work today will produce the same results as of old” (*Education*, p. 96).

Q. Ellen, now we are getting down to specifics when we talk about practicing the same educational principles Jesus used. What were those educational principles that shaped the young life of Jesus so that He could become the Master Teacher and the Christian teacher’s Example?

A. He came at a time when “In the prevailing systems of education, human philosophy had taken the place of divine revelation. . . . [A time when] the want of true excellence was supplied by appearance and profession. Semblance took the place of reality” [or symbolism over substance] (*Education*, p. 74).

Q. Ellen, what were the results of those prevailing educational theories?

A. “As they [people] ceased to recognize the Divine, they ceased to regard the human. Truth, honor, integrity, confidence, compassion, were departing from the earth. . . . The idea of duty, of the obligation of strength to weakness, of human dignity and human rights, was cast aside as a dream or a fable. . . . Wealth and power, ease and self-indulgence, were sought as the highest good” (*Education*, p. 75).

Q. Ellen, what was Christ’s solution to these misguided educational theories?

A. “There was but one hope for the human race, . . . that there might be brought to mankind the power of a new life; that the knowledge of God might be restored to the world. . . . Christ came to demonstrate the value of the divine principles by revealing their power for the regeneration of humanity” (*Education*, pp. 76, 77).

[Here again we have the working out of the goal of education and redemption, humanity’s restoration, not only their forgiveness.]

Q. Ellen, can you give us briefly some of the principles that shaped Christ’s educational experience as our Master Teacher?

A. It will be a pleasure:

1. His mental library was immersed in the “Heaven-appointed

sources” available, including the Scriptures, nature, and the experiences of life (*Education*, p. 77).

2. In the process of becoming a Master Teacher, He took a minor in sociology. He made a point of “understand[ing] humanity. . . Christ alone had experience in all the sorrows and temptations that befall human beings. . . . A sharer in all the experiences of humanity, He could feel not only for, but with, every burdened and tempted and struggling one” (*Education*, p. 78).

3. Even more dramatic was that He became the illustration of what He was teaching: “What He taught, He lived. . . . His words were the expression, not only of His own life-experience, but of His own character. Not only did He teach the truth, but He was the truth. It was this that gave His teaching power” (*Education*, pp. 78, 79).

4. When Jesus looked at His *students* “He discerned infinite possibilities. He saw men as they might be, transfigured by His grace” (*Education*, p. 80). Students responded because they wanted to live up to His expectations.

5. When Jesus looked at His classroom daily He looked upward for the wisdom and grace to make His teaching methods effective that day, just as any serious teacher today seeks for this wisdom and grace: “As a man He supplicated the throne of God, till His humanity was charged with a heavenly current that connected humanity with divinity. Receiving life from God, He imparted life to men” (*Education*, pp. 80, 81).

6. Contrary to prevailing methods, Jesus “did not deal in abstract theories Instead of directing the people to study men’s theories about God, His word, or His works, He taught them to behold Him, as manifested in His works, in His word, and by His providences” (*Education*, p. 81).

7. Contrary to prevailing methods, Jesus did not compartmentalize the educational experience: “To Him nothing was without purpose. The sports of the child, the toils of the man, life’s pleasures and cares and pains, all were means to the one end,—the revelation of God for the uplifting of humanity” (*Education*, p. 82).

Q. Ellen, how can the great controversy principle help teachers today to prepare themselves for their classrooms, whatever the academic level?

A. I can think of ten areas especially on which committed teachers will focus:

1. They recognize that “for almost every other qualification that contributes to his success, the teacher is in great degree dependent upon physical vigor. The better the health, the better will be his work” (*Education*, p. 277).

2. They also realize that “physical health and uprightness of character should be combined with high literary qualifications. . . . The schoolroom is no place for surface-work. No teacher who is satisfied with superficial knowledge will attain a high degree of efficiency. . . . The true teacher is not content with dull thoughts, an indolent mind, or a loose memory” (*Education*, p. 278).

3. They are “quick to discern and improve every opportunity for doing good; those who with enthusiasm combine true dignity; who are able to control, and ‘apt to teach,’ . . . can inspire thought, arouse energy, and impart courage and life” (*Education*, p. 279).

4. They “will allow nothing to stand in the way of earnest endeavor for self-improvement. [They] will spare no pains to reach the highest standard of excellence” (*Education*, p. 281).

5. They have discovered that under the great controversy theme paradigm, “instruction in scientific and literary lines alone can not suffice. The teacher should have a more comprehensive education than can be gained by the study of books. He should possess not only strength but breadth of mind. . . . The principles of education that He [God] has given are the only safe guide. A qualification essential for every teacher is a knowledge of these principles, and such acceptance of them as will make them a controlling power in his own life. . . . Order, thoroughness, punctuality, self-control, a sunny temper, evenness of disposition, self-sacrifice, integrity, and courtesy are essential qualifications. . . . The teacher can gain the respect of his pupils in no other way than by revealing in his own character the principles that he seeks to teach them” (*Education*, pp. 276-277).

6. They have learned through experience that “through faith in Christ, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellence developed” (*Education*, p. 257).

7. Further, they have learned that “prayer and faith are closely allied, and they need to be studied together. In the prayer of faith there is a divine science, it is a science that every one who would make his life-work a success must understand. . . . These are lessons that only he who himself has learned them can teach” (*Education*, pp. 257, 259).

8. They have also learned that “the garden of the heart must be cultivated. The soil must be broken up by repentance. The evil growths that choke the good grain must be uprooted. As soil once overgrown by thorns can be reclaimed only by diligent labor, so the evil tendencies of the heart can be overcome only by earnest effort in the name and strength of Christ” (*Education*, p. 111).

9. They have grown to appreciate the Bible, not only for its inspi-

rational value, but also for its principles of truth, such as:

- a. "Only in the light that shines from Calvary can nature's teaching be read aright" (*Education*, p. 101).
- b. "The deepest students of science are constrained to recognize in nature the working of infinite power. But to man's unaided reason, nature's teaching can not but be contradictory and disappointing. Only in the light of revelation can it be read aright" (*Education*, p. 134).
- c. "No part of the Bible is of greater value than are its biographies" (*Education*, p. 146).

10. They are grasping the larger picture of why Adventists have been given their distinctive, special calling in hastening the preparation of a people to meet their Lord. "Those who think of the result of hastening or hindering the gospel think of it in relation to themselves and to the world. Few think of its relation to God. . . . Yet God feels it all. In order to destroy sin and its results He gave His best Beloved, and He has put it in our power, through cooperation with Him, to bring this scene of misery to an end" (*Education*, pp. 263, 264).

"With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the whole world! How soon might the end come—the end of suffering and sorrow and sin!" (*Education*, p. 271).

Q. Ellen, how should the great controversy theme and the teaching example of Jesus help us in developing our teaching methods today?

A. I can think of eleven important teaching methods that Jesus would use:

- 1. "The true teacher is not satisfied with second-rate work" (*Education*, p. 29).

2. "He is not satisfied with directing his students to a standard lower than the highest which it is possible for them to attain" (*Education*, p. 29).
3. True teachers are not "content with imparting to them only technical knowledge . . . [but] to inspire [students] with principles of truth, obedience, honor, integrity, and purity—principles that will make them a positive force for the stability and uplifting of society" (*Education*, p. 29).
4. The true teacher's "first effort and his constant aim" is "to aid the student in comprehending these principles, and in entering into that relation with Christ which will make them a controlling power in the life" (*Education*, p. 30).
5. True teachers understand that they must teach these principles, "not as a dry theory," knowing that "those who would impart truth must themselves practice its principles" (*Education*, p. 41).
6. True teachers grasp that it would be "a sin to allow children to grow up in ignorance of useful labor" (*Education*, p. 47).
7. True teachers pass on to students "how to pray, how to approach their Creator, how to exercise faith in Him, and how to understand and obey the teachings of His Spirit" (*Education*, p. 47).
8. True teachers recognize that "true education is not forcing instruction on an unready and unreceptive mind. The mental powers must be awakened, the interest aroused" (*Education*, p. 41).
9. True teachers have worked through in their own lives the relationship between reason, doubt, and faith: "God has given in the Scriptures sufficient evidence of their divine authority. His own

existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. True, He has not removed the possibility of doubt; faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration; those who wish to doubt have opportunity; but those who desire to know the truth find ample ground for faith” (*Education*, p. 169).

10. True teachers endeavor to make clear that their students should not expect to enjoy “the benefits of the gospel, while they deny its spirit. But this can not be. Those who reject the privilege of fellowship with Christ in service, reject the only training that imparts a fitness for participation with Him in His glory. They reject the training that in this life gives strength and nobility of character” (*Education*, p. 264).

11. True teachers have learned that the good is often the enemy of the best. “‘Something better’ is the watchword of education, the law of all true living. Whatever Christ asks us to renounce, He offers in its stead something better. Often the youth cherish objects, pursuits, and pleasures that may not appear to be evil, but that fall short of the highest good. . . . Let them be directed to something better than display, ambition, or self-indulgence . . . [where] duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure” (*Education*, pp. 296, 297).

Q. Ellen, perhaps the next question gets to the heart of the matter. How does the great controversy theme directly inform the development of the Adventist curriculum from K-16?

A. This is the core issue in education because teachers may be enthusiastic, organized, highly regarded among their peers, and win all the popularity contests and still come far short of being Christian educators. Let me quickly go over at least twenty-six areas that need to be incorporated in each teacher’s classroom curriculum, some areas more explicit to some

teachers than to others:

1. The central place is given to Biblical studies because “the more we search the Bible, the deeper is our conviction that it is the word of the living God, and human reason bows before the majesty of divine revelation. . . . The fact needs to be emphasized, and often repeated, that the mysteries of the Bible are not such because God has sought to conceal truth, but because our own weakness or ignorance makes us incapable of comprehending or appropriating truth. The limitation is not in His purpose, but in our capacity” (*Education*, pp. 170-171). “It is not enough to know what others have thought or learned about the Bible. Every one must in the judgment give account of himself to God, and each should learn for himself what is truth” (*Education*, p. 188).

2. We emphasize correct economic principles because principles such as we find in the Book of Proverbs, for example, bind up “the well-being of society, of both secular and religious associations. It is these principles that give security to property and life” (*Education*, pp. 136-137).

3. We emphasize appropriate music because “it is one of the most effective means of impressing the heart with spiritual truth. . . . The value of song as a means of education should never be lost sight of” (*Education*, p. 168).

4. We emphasize the body/mind/soul interaction and unity because “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” (*Education*, p. 195).

5. We emphasize health and hygiene because “without health no one can as distinctly understand or as completely fulfil his obliga-

tions 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” (*Education*, p. 195).

6. We emphasize “the electric power of the brain” because this power, “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” should be emphasized. Likewise, “the depressing and even ruinous effect of anger, discontent, selfishness, or impurity, and, on the other hand, the marvelous life-giving power to be found in cheerfulness, unselfishness, and gratitude should also be shown.” (*Education*, p. 197).

7. We emphasize correct posture, “both in sitting and in standing,” and by “example and precept. . . . insist that it shall be maintained” (*Education*, p. 198).

8. We emphasize the “relation between plain living and high thinking” which places responsibility on students “to decide whether our lives shall be controlled by the mind or by the body [By our glands or by the cerebral cortex].” (*Education*, p. 202). “The relation of diet to intellectual development should be given far more attention than it has received. Mental confusion and dullness are often the result of errors in diet” (*Education*, p. 204). [Brain power depends on oxygen and quality blood, and oxygen and quality blood depend on exercise and proper nutrition. No short cuts with cups of coffee, late-night snacks, and whatever else.]

9. We emphasize exercise because “physical inaction lessens not only mental but moral power. The brain nerves that connect the whole system are the medium through which heaven communicates with man, and affects the inmost life. Whatever hinders the

circulation of the electric current in the nervous system, thus weakening the vital powers and lessening mental susceptibility, makes it more difficult to arouse the moral nature" (*Education*, p. 209).

10. We emphasize companionship with students on all academic levels because "the true teacher can impart to his pupils few gifts so valuable as the gift of his own companionship" (*Education*, p. 212).

11. We emphasize the benefit of manual labor because "labor was appointed as a blessing. . . . It becomes a part of God's great plan for our recovery from the fall" (*Education*, p. 214). "The work should have a definite aim and should be thorough" (*Education*, p. 218). "The benefit of manual training is needed also by professional men. . . . Practical work encourages close observation and independent thought. Rightly performed, it tends to develop that practical wisdom which we call common sense" (*Education*, p. 220).

12. We emphasize the cultivation of "self-forgetfulness [a characteristic] which imparts to the life such an unconscious grace. Children need appreciation, sympathy, and encouragement, but care should be taken not to foster in them a love of praise. . . . A wise teacher will not encourage in youth the desire or effort to display their ability or proficiency" (*Education*, p. 237).

13. We emphasize the cultivation of cheerfulness and courtesy because "all may possess a cheerful countenance, a gentle voice, a courteous manner, and these are elements of power. . . . True courtesy is not learned by the mere practice of rules of etiquette. . . . The essence of true politeness is consideration for others. . . . Real refinement of thought and manner is better learned in the school of the divine Teacher than by any observance of set rules" (*Education*, pp. 240-241).

14. We emphasize “right principles in regard to dress” because “without such teaching, the work of education is too often retarded and perverted. Love of dress, and devotion to fashion, are among the teacher’s most formidable rivals and most effective hindrances. . . . Lead the youth to see that in dress, as in diet, plain living is indispensable to high thinking. . . . A person’s character is judged by his style of dress. A refined taste, a cultivated mind, will be revealed in the choice of simple and appropriate attire” (*Education*, pp. 246-248).

15. We emphasize character above intellectual acquirements without ignoring “the value of scientific knowledge or literary acquirements; but above information it [true education] values power; above power, goodness; above intellectual acquirements, character. The world does not so much need men of great intellect as of noble character. . . . True education imparts this wisdom. It teaches us the best use not only of one but all our powers and acquirements. Thus it covers the whole circle of obligation—to ourselves, to the world, and to God” (*Education*, p. 225).

16. We emphasize the Sabbath because “the value of the Sabbath as a means of education is beyond estimate” (*Education*, p. 250).

17. We emphasize personal responsibility because “the wise educator . . . will seek to encourage confidence and to strengthen the sense of honor. . . . Suspicion demoralizes, producing the very evils it seeks to prevent. . . . On the same principle it is better to request than to command; the one thus addressed has opportunity to prove himself loyal to right principles. His obedience is the result of choice rather than compulsion” (*Education*, pp. 289, 290).

18. We emphasize cheerful obedience because “the government of God knows no compromise with evil. Neither in the home nor in the school should disobedience be tolerated. No parent or teacher

who has at heart the well-being of those under his [or her] care will compromise with the stubborn, self-will that defies authority or resorts to subterfuge or evasion in order to escape obedience. It is not love but sentimentalism that palters with wrongdoing, seeks by coaxing or bribes to secure compliance, and finally accepts some substitute in place of the thing required. . . . The greatest wrong done to a child or youth is to allow him to become fastened in the bondage of evil habit" (*Education*, pp. 290, 291).

19. We emphasize the development of self-government because "the object of discipline is the training of the child for self-government. He should be taught self-reliance and self-control. . . . As soon as he is capable of understanding, his reason should be enlisted on the side of obedience" (*Education*, p. 287).

20. We emphasize building self-respect by asking "the older [to] assist the younger, the strong the weak, and, so far as possible, let each be called upon to do something in which he excels. This will encourage self-respect and a desire to be useful" (*Education*, p. 286).

21. We emphasize positive goals in discipline because "the true object of reproof is gained only when the wrongdoer himself is led to see his fault, and his will is enlisted for its correction. When this is accomplished, point him to the source of pardon and power. Seek to preserve his self-respect, and to inspire him with courage and hope. This work is the nicest ["delicate"], the most difficult, ever committed to human beings" (*Education*, pp. 291, 292).

22. We emphasize doing joyfully the tough assignments because "the true test of character is found in the willingness to bear burdens, to take the hard place, to do the work that needs to be done, though it bring no earthly recognition or reward. The true way of dealing with trial is not by seeking to escape it but by transforming

it" (*Education*, p. 295).

23. We emphasize the study of history "from the divine point of view" (*Education*, p. 238).

24. We emphasize cultivating the strength of the will because "the will should be guided and molded but not ignored or crushed. Save the strength of the will; in the battle of life it will be needed" (*Education*, p. 289).

Q. Ellen, how does this emphasis on the will relate to the great controversy theme?

A. As you will see in my other writings and especially in my book *Education*, God is restoring men and women so that they will be safe to save in heaven and on the earth made new. They are not only forgiven rebels but reborn sons and daughters who have developed a habit pattern, a spontaneous disposition—a will—to say Yes to whatever God wills and wherever He should lead. They do not expect God to do the driving for them, for God has already told His followers that He is trying to restore them to be safe drivers now, and drivers that can be trusted forever throughout the universe.

Q. In many places you have emphasized the importance of responsibility, that no one should be a shadow of someone else. How does this emphasis relate to what you say about strengthening the power of the will?

A. "Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a 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 the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought. . . . Instead of

[producing] educated weaklings, institutions of learning may send forth men who are strong to think and act—men who are masters and not slaves of circumstances, men who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions” (*Education*, pp. 17, 18).

[Here again we see the great controversy theme permeating Ellen White’s philosophy of education. No one will be redeemed because he or she belonged to any particular group. As responsible individuals, the redeemed will have made a life decision evident to all that they have “willed” to trust and obey their Creator. Rebellion arose in the mind of Lucifer, a highly intellectualized individual. But Lucifer directed his mind to say No to God instead of Thank You. And the many angels who “fell” with him had given their wills over to Lucifer’s direction, even though they had enormous evidence that God was not like what Lucifer was making Him out to be. God has put His integrity on the line when He entrusts the future of the universe to individuals, angels and humans, who choose willingly and without coercion to honor and trust Him. It is the work of Christian education to foster that sense of individual integrity and the power of the will.]

Q. I notice you have three more aspects of the Adventist curriculum that will help us all to understand the great controversy theme better, and they seem to focus on the spiritual objectives we should hold up before the students of all ages.

A. Yes, without these final three, everything already said is virtually beside the point and that would be an eternal tragedy.

1. We emphasize an understanding of the nature of faith and its conditions because “faith is trusting God. . . . Faith receives from God the life that alone can produce true growth and efficiency. . . . How to exercise faith should be made very plain. To every promise of God there are conditions” (*Education*, p. 253).
2. We emphasize the obligation of church membership because

“another obligation, too often lightly regarded—one that needs to be made plain to the youth awakened to the claims of Christ—is the obligation of church relationship. . . . Connection with Christ, then, involves connection with His church” (*Education*, pp. 268, 269).

3. We emphasize that character counts and determines our future: “Let the youth and the little children be taught to choose for themselves that royal robe woven in heaven’s loom—the ‘fine linen, clean and white,’ which all the holy ones of earth will wear. This robe, Christ’s own spotless character, is freely offered to every human being. But all who receive it will receive and wear it here. . . . They are clothing themselves with His [Christ’s] beautiful garment of character. This . . . will make them beautiful and beloved here, and will hereafter be their title of admission to the palace of the King. His promise is: ‘They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy (Rev. 3:4).’” (*Education*, p. 249).

Now let us consider this question:

If you were Satan, how would you try to mess up these core educational principles? If you were Satan, wouldn’t you work all these principles around to something like the following?

1. “Wormwood, we must turn the principle, ‘Truth shall make you free,’ into ‘Information/Knowledge shall make you free.’
2. “We, of course, will not erase the concept of ‘restoration,’—that would be too bold. But we should postpone such hopes until after their foolish talk about a resurrection; do anything, but keep their minds off restoration in this life.
3. “We will convince teachers that educational theory and philosophy is a specialty for schools of education to think about. But, convince historians,

physicists, and theologians that they have their own distinctive theories for the purposes and philosophies in their own particular areas.

4. "We will cloud the search for truth with the high-sounding phrase, 'academic freedom,' so that scholars will feel they are above accountability to their constituents.

5. "We will discredit the notion that the teacher's ethos has anything to do with the quality of their teaching and we will brand the notion pure provincialism, even discrimination, and a form of anti-intellectualism.

6. "We will ridicule the notion that a theological principle should permeate and inform curricula as well as methodology and scare the timid into thinking that such thinking will not stand the scrutiny of accrediting associations.

7. "We will sell the notion that a church-appointed Board of Trustees should not be responsible for curriculum, student life, and teacher qualifications for two reasons: it will not stand the scrutiny of accrediting associations and it contradicts the school's commitment to academic freedom.

8. "We will redefine grace by limiting it to what Jesus did on the Cross and to His gift of forgiveness and mercy only. We will mute the concept of "grace" as being unlimited, unmerited power to transform lives that seek God's help and thus mute the idea of restoration as being the purpose of the gospel. This will directly affect what is taught in religion classes from K-16. But it will also change the content of such courses as the social sciences, as well as literature and science classes.

9. "We will fog the truth about the nature of man while we will salute Alexander Pope who said, 'Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; The proper study of mankind is man.' *Essay on Man*, Epistle II.

10. "We will be even more effective in redirecting the theologians. We will urge them to become experts on a particular biblical book, a particular

archeological dig, or linguistic theory. We will heap on them the accolades of others who pursue the Bible as information to be mastered. But we will cloud their minds from seeing the inner coherence of the Bible; especially, from seeing any grand central theme throughout its pages. We will have fun confusing their definitions of grace, faith, gospel, and justification, etc.

11. “We will motivate students by appealing to their egos. We will contrive subtle appeals to being first, to being Number One, from the first grade on. We will use competition as the strongest motivator. We will exalt such characteristics as stamina, perseverance, and discipline as they strain to be Number One. At the same time, we will use sly methods of ridicule to intimidate those who play around with weak, sniffling words such as unselfishness and humility.

12. “We will create the allusion that everyone understands all their silly theological words such as grace and faith. Just as long as they don’t see Jesus as their High Priest with all the power available to shut us down in the lives of His so-called believers.”

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