



Seventh-day Adventists have historically placed a high value on the Bible and its multifaceted truth, which has been illuminated and supported by the writings of Ellen G. White. Her writings have proved their authenticity concerning various aspects of life, including the universal challenges of this world and the rapidly developing last-day events. Moreover, the Bible

repeatedly points out that the biblical knowledge of God and His will for humanity are to be shared with every human being. That is one of the reasons why Ellen White frequently spoke about Adventist education, which imparts and fosters a balanced development of the whole person spiritually, intellectually, physically, and socially in a faith-and-learning environment.

The philosophical value of Adventist education and its proper imple-

mentation in the lives of God's people in the context of the final eschatological events are inseparable concepts. Thus, considering the eschatological context of the great controversy between good and evil, truth and falsehood, Ellen White called on the church to be educated in "the working out of God's purpose in the history of nations and in the revelation of things to come," because there are

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“lessons to be learned, the work to be done, the transformation of character to be effected.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, this article seeks to clarify, in the light of the Spirit of Prophecy, the nature and function of those challenges in the context of Adventist education that every teacher and educational administrator must face, recognize, and overcome in order to be ready for the rapidly approaching final eschatological events.

### The Three Pillars of Adventist Education

Seventh-day Adventist education has been built on three historical pillars that bring together the past, the present, and the future: *redemption*, *wholeness*, and *permanence*. Adventist education has its own unique history of about 145 years since the beginning of Ellen White’s contribution to it and the establishment of the first Adventist school in 1872.<sup>2</sup> However, to find the beginning of the extended history of education, one must go back throughout the ages of humanity. The educational pattern established by God in the Garden of Eden was characterized by close association and a direct relationship between humanity and divinity.<sup>3</sup> At that time, the first created human beings were exposed to physical, mental, and spiritual lessons which they were privileged to learn from surrounding nature and directly from their Creator. The first couple would carry these wholistic lessons with them throughout their life, long after they were displaced from their original home (Genesis 3:24).

Many years later, Moses in his last sermon called God’s people to continuously educate their children—when they sat, walked, laid down, and rose up—in order to impart to them the moral values of life (Deuteronomy 6:7). These standards of a proper training of a child have not diminished with time. The words of the Lord to the priest Eli, “those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Samuel 2:30, NKJV),<sup>4</sup> remind the contemporary generations to revere the Almighty God.

Thus, the principles of Christ-centered educational methodology—to touch the human heart with knowledge of eternal values—were first introduced in Eden, taught by the patriarchs, repeated by Jesus, and re-emphasized throughout the ages by faithful believers who shared them with their children. These principles have not been altered with the passing of time or change of geographical

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location. From the writings of Ellen White, these are deduced to be *redemption*, *wholeness*, and *permanence*.<sup>5</sup>

### Redemption

Ellen White devoted numerous pages to the topic of Christ’s redemptive acts of love on behalf of the fallen human beings. Such books as *The Desire of Ages*, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, *Steps to Christ*, *The Ministry of Healing*, et cetera, offer profound insights about Christ’s sacrifice. However, in the book *Education*, Ellen White put a special accent on educa-

tion by vividly describing it as a work of redemption. In Chapter 4 she explained this concept by stating that “[i]n the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the aim of this unity is to help students to initiate an intimate relationship with Christ that will become the “controlling power”<sup>7</sup> in their lives (1 Corinthians 3:11). Without this transformation, education becomes “more harmful than beneficial.”<sup>8</sup>

In addition to this, Ellen White stated that “the science of redemption is the science of all sciences.”<sup>9</sup> This is the training that can be compared to the process of restoration because it is the method “by which the soul is trained for heaven.”<sup>10</sup> The notion that redemption engages the attention of the Creator of the universe elevates the students. They are given the privilege of being engaged in the highest educational exercise ever known to human beings, one that will even be the subject of study throughout the unending ages of eternity.<sup>11</sup>

### Wholeness

*Wholeness* is another fundamental principle of true education, as can clearly be seen in Ellen White’s writings. It stands for “the preparation of the physical, mental, and moral powers for the performance of every duty; it is the training of body, mind, and soul for divine service.”<sup>12</sup> This calls for a wholesome approach to life in general and education in particular. For human beings to experience a wholistically balanced development, the curricula also need to be balanced and well-rounded. Therefore, we must include faith elements in the learning process, as well as for physical education that will benefit not only the body, but also the mind and soul of the students of all ages.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, Adventist education, when planned and implemented effectively, presents a balanced perspective that incorporates the academic aspects of the students’ development.<sup>14</sup> Effective physical training that engages youth in productive work helps them to elevate their minds to spiritual realities

and develop their character<sup>15</sup>; and character is the quality that can endure throughout eternity.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, physical labor is not a free passport to heaven (Acts 4:12; Romans 6:23); neither is the process of character formation and development a matter of gaining credit with God, for “our works in and of themselves have no merit.”<sup>17</sup> It is only through the grace of God that individuals grow and develop to reach “the perfection of Christian character, striving continually for conformity to the will of God.”<sup>18</sup> Hence, a balanced, wholistic development of the person plays a decisive and distinguishing role in true education, contrasts sharply with all other educational approaches and philosophical standards.

### **Permanence**

The third principle of Adventist education stands for its continuity throughout the “whole period of existence possible to human beings.”<sup>19</sup> Ellen White described in detail a perspective of continuous learning processes that begin in the womb, continue throughout childhood and adolescence and into maturity, and extend into eternity if the person stays faithful to God. Thus, much of her writings are dedicated to personal development before the individual reaches adulthood,<sup>20</sup> starting with prenatal influences on the embryo through the mother’s attitude and disposition.<sup>21</sup> The value of such stimuli is often ignored or misunderstood. However, God values even unborn children, and He has a plan for each one of them (Isaiah 49:1, 5; Jeremiah 1:5).

Ellen White wrote in depth about the value of home education and recommended that both parents should play an important role not only as teachers, but also by standing in place of God to their young ones to enable them to comprehend His beautiful character.<sup>22</sup> She frequently emphasized that the Christian home

should be “a symbol of the home in heaven<sup>23</sup>” where true education is combined with love, and discipline molds and fashions the young.

At the same time, Ellen White was a great advocate for church schools<sup>24</sup> being established whenever and wherever possible, whether connected to small or large churches in rural or urban areas, for the benefit of children’s wholistic development, and where children can learn the value of service to others. For this reason, the

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moral quality of teachers’ character should be considered as important as their intellectual development: “The teacher’s spiritual growth is sustained by the interaction between two imperatives—religious beliefs and religious practices.”<sup>25</sup>

In addition to church schools, Ellen White stressed the importance and value of the local church where education continues for all ages training church members to carry forth the work of bringing others to Christ.<sup>26</sup> She urged that “there should be no delay in this well-planned effort to educate the church mem-

bers”<sup>27</sup> so that they will grow in Christian graces and unbelievers around them “may be charmed by the faith that produces such results.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, God’s people of all ages and ranks can grow in grace through obtaining a wholistic education, because “the works of salvation and redemption are available to all who would avail themselves of the opportunity through Christ.”<sup>29</sup> There are no exceptions to the continual educational process, except one’s personal rejection of it, because “[i]n the school of Christ students never graduate. Among the pupils are both the old and the young.”<sup>30</sup>

As a culmination of a continuous educational journey, Ellen White prophetically elaborated on this grand occasion with the heavenly scenes in mind: “All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God’s children. With unutterable delight we shall enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings.”<sup>31</sup> That is why she consistently called her readers to pursue true education on this earth as much as possible, so that God’s people can not only live with Him throughout eternity, but also in order that the education gained here “will be perfected in heaven” where the redeemed “will only just enter a higher grade.”<sup>32</sup>

### **Adventist Education: Missiological Purpose**

Adventist education plays a crucial role in the further development of true identity in the minds and hearts of young ones by preparing them to become active participants in God’s missiological plan on this earth. The missiological concept combines two traditional approaches that must work together. On the one hand, there is a need to preserve the identity of the church by protecting and nurturing the church’s youth. On the other hand, the missiological element and the way of living are critical aspects. If the church wants to faithfully fulfill the Great Commission in view of Christ’s soon coming, these

two dimensions must be combined.<sup>33</sup> However, in its essence, while the second aspect was strongly emphasized by God's messenger more than 100 years ago, it has not yet been fully utilized in the Adventist educational system.

Ellen White envisioned young people being in the very front of God's work and ardently leading its missionary outreach to the world. To her, they "will with their ardent zeal stir up the sluggish energies of God's people, and so increase the power of the church in the world."<sup>34</sup> In *Education* she proclaimed: "With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world!"<sup>35</sup> This calls for Adventist educational institutions to seriously reconsider not only a re-emphasis on the preservation of true Adventist identity, but also its missiological purpose in order to fulfill Christ's commission (Matthew 28:19, 20) and advance God's kingdom.

### **Adventist Education: Transformational Discipleship**

Nurturing spiritual disciplines in the lives of young people depends on surrounding them with teachers and educational administrators they can trust. In other words, they need adult role models who love them unconditionally while showing them the reality about themselves, people around them, and God as their Maker and Redeemer.<sup>36</sup> This group of adults includes not only teachers and administrators at school and parents at home, but also the local church members, church pastor, and his or her team of lay ministers. The influential role of these individuals in education is crucial and should not be minimized since they are in the business of developing citizens for the kingdom of God.

Esmond, elaborating on the same note, calls for education providers to model transformational discipleship instead of behavior modification among young ones.<sup>37</sup> Transformational discipleship requires not just a

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one-time interaction, but the establishment of a lasting friendship with a positive role model. He explains that in order to help children and youth "make the leap from mere belief in God to owning their walk with Him, and by extension His counsels to them, churches must create opportunities for them to be mentored by caring, mature followers of Christ."<sup>38</sup> By extension, the underlying point here is to educate church members concerning their responsibility of being "spiritual parents" to every child and young adult in the local church and church school.

Thus, the eschatological aspect of Adventist education can be fully grasped and implemented when a combination of education at home, in Adventist schools, and the equipping church with its pastor, are actively involved in God's mission. This collaboration of the above-mentioned entities will not only motivate young people, but also arm them with insights and understanding concerning their responsibilities before and during final eschatological events so that they will be ready and willing to dedicate their talents, energy, and indeed

their entire lives to prepare themselves and others for eternity.<sup>39</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Ellen White's eschatological statement, "The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God,"<sup>40</sup> calls for every Adventist to become serious concerning the quality of their spiritual lives and to teach others the value of establishing a loving relationship with Christ. There will be a final collision between human laws and the precepts of Yahweh, between the clear commandments of the Bible and counterfeit religion based on human tradition.<sup>41</sup> Hence every believer, whether young or old, has to be educated and established in Christ in order to overcome the enemy and be victorious at the soon coming of Christ.

This calls the contemporary Seventh-day Adventist Church to re-examine and re-emphasize the importance of Adventist education by all its means and on all its levels in order to be able to stay faithful in the face of the rapidly approaching eschatological events. One must remember that the authentic education given in the Bible and recapped in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy will stand the test of time and continue through eternity. In her writings, Ellen White contributed immensely to this cause. She called on believers to get personally acquainted with Christ and His will, and to teach the principles of Christianity to their children at home, school, and church. They "need courage, firmness, and a knowledge of God and His Word" so that "the light of a godlike character" in their lives will "shine the brightest,"<sup>42</sup> and they will choose to become the winners on God's side. Therefore, one of the greatest challenges facing all educators and school administrators, including the parents, pastors, and church members, is to clearly understand the true value of Adventist education, its significance, and its far-ranging consequences, to reassess and support it with all the available means, because "[t]hose who are wise shall shine

Like the brightness of the firmament,  
And those who turn many to right-  
eousness Like the stars forever and  
ever” (Daniel 12:3, NKJV). ✍

*This article has been peer reviewed.*



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#### Recommended citation:

**Anna M. Galeniece**, “Adventist Education and Its Eschatological Dimension in the Writings of Ellen White,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 82:1 (January-March 2020): 18-22.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Herbert E. Douglass, “Ellen G. White’s Role in Adventist Education.” In *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon, eds. (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2014), 794.
3. Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1954), 294; \_\_\_\_\_, *Education*, 20.
4. Scriptures credited to NKJV are taken from the *New King James Version* of the Bible. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
5. For more information, see Julián Melgosa, “Philosophy of Education,” *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 796, 797.
6. White, *Education*, 30.
7. Ibid.

8. \_\_\_\_\_, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1913), 412.
9. \_\_\_\_\_, *My Life Today* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1952), 360.
10. \_\_\_\_\_, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1898), 330.
11. From Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, page 360—the whole paragraph reads: “The science of redemption is the science of all sciences, the science that is the study of the angels and of all the intelligences of the unfallen worlds, the science that engages the attention of our Lord and Saviour, the science that enters into the purpose brooded in the mind of the Infinite—‘kept in silence through times eternal,’ the science that will be the study of God’s redeemed throughout the endless ages. This is the highest study in which it is possible for man to engage. As no other study can, it will quicken the mind and uplift the soul.”
12. \_\_\_\_\_, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1900), 330.
13. \_\_\_\_\_, *Testimonies for the Church* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1948), 5:522.
14. \_\_\_\_\_, *Mind, Character, and Personality* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Assn., 1977), 1:287; \_\_\_\_\_, *Education*, 222; \_\_\_\_\_, *True Education* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2010), 131. See also Andrew Mutero, “Implementation of Ellen White’s Counsel on Manual Labor and Training in Adventist Education in Africa,” *The Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the Church*, Anna Galeniece, ed. (Nairobi, Kenya: Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office, Adventist University of Africa, 2017), 181-193: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sampson\\_M\\_Nwaomah/publication/339883339\\_The\\_BibleThe\\_Spirit\\_of\\_Prophecy\\_and\\_the\\_Church/links/5e6a5068458515047a822eb3/The-Bible-The-Spirit-of-Prophecy-and-the-Church.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sampson_M_Nwaomah/publication/339883339_The_BibleThe_Spirit_of_Prophecy_and_the_Church/links/5e6a5068458515047a822eb3/The-Bible-The-Spirit-of-Prophecy-and-the-Church.pdf). It is important to note that while manual labor opportunities are available in some schools and institutions, others struggle to maintain programs that will provide opportunities for all students that need and/or want to work.
15. White, *Education*, 21.
16. \_\_\_\_\_, *Sons and Daughters of God* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1955), 337.
17. \_\_\_\_\_, *God’s Amazing Grace* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1973), 331.
18. \_\_\_\_\_, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:520.
19. \_\_\_\_\_, *True Education*, 9.
20. See such books by Ellen G. White as *Child Guidance*, *The Adventist Home*, *The Ministry of Healing*, *Education*, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, etc.
21. Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1952), 255-259.

22. \_\_\_\_\_, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1898), 308.
23. \_\_\_\_\_, “Devote Yourselves to God’s Service,” *The Signs of the Times* 16:34 (September 1, 1890): 469; \_\_\_\_\_, *The Adventist Home*, 38.
24. \_\_\_\_\_, *Child Guidance*, 307; \_\_\_\_\_, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:199; \_\_\_\_\_, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Assn., 1923), 221.
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27. \_\_\_\_\_, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:119.
28. Ibid.
29. Raveloharimisy, “Belief and Practice,” 5.
30. White, *My Life Today*, 361.
31. \_\_\_\_\_, *Education*, 307.
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37. Dwain N. Esmond, “A Pill for the Millennial Mind: Ellen White for New Generations.” In *The Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the Church*, 194-207.
38. Ibid., 200, 201.
39. George R. Knight, “Ground Zero in the Great Controversy: The Struggle for the Minds and Hearts of the Next Generation,” *Ministry* (June 2017): 13; Jiří Moskala, “The Church School: Where Churches and Schools Collaborate in Mission,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 80:2 (April-June 2018): 4-8: <https://jae.adventist.org/en/2018.2.2>.
40. Ellen G. White, “The Devil’s Strategy Against Sabbathkeepers,” *Maranatha: The Lord Is Coming* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1976), 161.
41. Ibid., 160.
42. \_\_\_\_\_, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1911), 431.